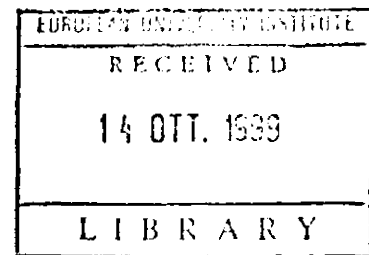


EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE
Department of Political and Social Sciences

**Trade Union Activists, East and West:
Divergence and convergence in the Italian and Polish plants
of multinational companies**



by
Guglielmo Meardi

Thesis submitted for assessment with
a view of obtaining the Degree of Doctor of the
European University Institute

Florence, November 1999

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Florence, November 1999

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SUMMARY

The thesis investigates the distinguishing features of workplace trade unionism in a post-communist country like Poland in comparison with a Western European country like Italy. It follows an interpretative approach, based on the analysis of 91 in-depth interviews with trade union activists from comparable plants of multinational industrial companies (three in Italy and three in Poland).

The thesis argues that both Italian and Polish trade unions take part of the same, parallel process of class consciousness disintegration. This process however – due to the unique experience of *alternation* to the former regime – takes more extreme forms in Poland, where the eventual differentiation, but also the acceptance of change, within the unions is larger. The outcome is a divergent trend, with the use of neo-proletarian rhetoric in Poland and of conservative rhetoric in Italy. The thesis then analyses the new sources of trade union solidarity, which appear in some interviews, arguing that they might partially substitute the declining class consciousness and avoid union fragmentation and corporatist or nationalist withdrawal.

INTRODUCTION

A few months after the fall of communism, I had in Cracow one of my very first (at that time still accidental) conversations with Polish workers. At a certain point one of my interlocutors incidentally said: 'You are in a different situation, you're a capitalist'. What I knew about class consciousness from Marxist readings and sociology textbooks, which I was already aware was barely adequate to the analysis of the Italian situation, was challenged by the involuntary offensiveness of an incidental sentence.

When looking at Polish workers (and later, at Czechs, Slovaks, East Germans, Hungarians, Albanians and Yugoslavs) I was continually surprised by a number of similarities, especially practical, with their Western counterparts, and at the same time by their difference from them. This was most striking in the case of the trade unions, traditionally the 'spokespersons' (although not necessarily representative) of the working class. I started to wonder whether union activists from the East and the West managed to communicate. From this curiosity stemmed the research project on which this thesis is based.

A few years after '89 I found where I could investigate empirically the nature of the differences between the Eastern and Western trade unions. Two important and authoritative Italian employers (Fiat Auto and Gruppo Lucchini) took over big Polish factories and started production there similar to that in their Italian plants. If the differences in trade union consciousness were due to the specificity of the local work settings, once the workplaces were made comparable by multinational capital, these differences should gradually disappear. If, instead, differences endured, this would mean that trade union consciousness does not directly depend on the work situation; the *meaning* the actors gave to the situation would turn out to be more important. This was, in a few words, the question with which the research began.

Gradually, this research question was elaborated further both methodologically and theoretically. Ultimately it has been organised around three interrelated main arguments, which may be presented as research hypotheses, albeit at quite a general level.

The first hypothesis is that in both countries the image of unity of the 'working class', rooted in the work experience, has disintegrated in a similar way. As a consequence, similar reactions were expected from Polish and Italian trade union activists, without them nevertheless preventing a political and social fragmentation. Paradoxically, the 'constant' between Italy and Poland should then be precisely the *absence* of constants, the disintegration of models. This has political consequences: the search for class politics in Eastern Europe is misplaced, neglecting that the working class there is not being *constructed* but rather *dismantled*.

The second hypothesis suggests that, against the background of this disintegration, the residual differences between Italy and Poland are not a simple legacy of the past, but are currently socially constructed. This is due on the one hand to the mediated nature of global and international experiences, and on the other hand to the unique experience of 'transition' the Eastern Europeans have lived through. In order to account for this experience, the teleological term 'transition' is inadequate, and I shall suggest (following Berger and Luckmann) the substitute 'alternation'. As a testable consequence of this unique experience, Poland cannot be considered *less* modern than Italy, according to the common, dominant conception of modernity. Eastern Europe is not following with some delay the Western path: on a number of issues the Eastern Europeans may appear even to be *more modern*, thanks to the willingness to change entailed by the former system's breakdown. This also has political consequences: the distinction between East and West, instead of disappearing with political integration, might take on a new meaning.

The third hypothesis draws on the difference between East and West and on working class fragmentation. It is that the international difference among workers in a globalized economy is evidence of the limits of the egalitarianism inherited from class consciousness. Concretely, trade union activists should perceive in similar ways international differences (like that between Italians and Poles) and other kinds of

differences emerging *within* the national working classes. Both factors actually raise the same problems of identity and solidarity redefinition. The consequences for the trade unions' agenda should be manifold.

This piece of research has concentrated on Italy and Poland, primarily because it was in these countries that comparable work settings were found. However, the extension of the conclusions to the whole of Western and Eastern Europe, although needing some care, does not appear to be impracticable. My personal experience suggests that once one knows Italian and Polish unions, one more easily understands on the one hand the French or the German, on the other the Hungarian or the Slovak. This is however not yet a sufficient argument. Theoretically more important is the fact that the peculiarity of Italy and Poland lies in their distinctive comparability. Not only do they share features like religion and level of industrialisation but more importantly they have represented, on the two sides of Europe, the same model of unionism: political, competitive and class-based. In other words, the model of *social movement unionism*. This analogy makes the two terms more comparable.

Indeed, Italy is not typical as a capitalist country, and Poland was even less typical as a communist country. However, if the main hypothesis is that of a basic difference between East and West but not due to traditions, these are logically the best cases for a test. In other words, if the union activists analysed here, in spite of the similarity in work situations and in the model of unionism, display significant differences, we can expect even greater differences between the unions in the other countries of Eastern and Western Europe.

The three main hypotheses outlined above will be discussed, through an in-depth analysis of the findings, in the 3rd, 4th, and 5th chapters respectively. Before arriving at the empirical study, however, it will be necessary to elaborate the hypotheses and the methodological approach (chapter 1), as well as the theoretical references used for the analysis (chapter 2). By contrast, the Reader will not find in the thesis introductory chapters on Polish and Italian industrial relations. As well as redundant, this would have been too much in contrast with the empirical approach 'from below' adopted in the thesis for the understanding of unionism. Therefore, I commend to the Reader instead the already available reference works in the local

languages (e.g. Kozek 1997; Cella and Treu 1998), or to the digests in English or French (e.g. Florek and Seweryński 1996; Gąciarz and Pańków 1997b; Regalia and Regini 1998).

CHAPTER 1

UNDERSTANDING TRADE UNION ACTIVISTS

Yes, I understand the kind of research you're carrying on. I have only one question: who does pay you?
(A union activist from Danone, Casale Cremasco, before starting the interview)

1. Rationale of a research perspective

This study focuses on the rank-and-file activists of the trade unions of two different countries, Italy and Poland, considered as the heirs of the labour movement. It follows the tradition of interpretative sociology, which is old, authoritative, and even noble if one calls it *verstehende Soziologie*. It uses a method – comparison – which a century and a half ago Auguste Comte considered as *the* method of sociology.

Labour movement, interpretative sociology, comparison... so many pages have been written on these words that any introduction ought to be redundant. However, nowadays, the approach, the method, and the topic of this study require, probably more than ever before, a justification. I shall therefore start with the rationale, step by step, of this research perspective: an interpretative (or understanding) comparison of trade union activists.

1.1. *Why understand?*

Trade unions, as interest organisations, are usually analysed from economic, institutional, and organisational standpoints. Quantitative studies, investigations of collective bargaining or game-theory analyses may appear more suitable than a qualitative, interpretative approach.

However, trade union action is not only a matter of interests, since interests have, firstly, to be defined, recognised and expressed. To use Przeworski's words (1985: 70), class struggle 'is a struggle *about* class before it is a struggle *among* classes'. This was valid at the time of the 'making' of the working class studied by

Edward Thompson and is still valid now. The fact that the 'working class' is becoming, in multinational companies, really international, does not automatically imply the expression of international interests. Subjectively, it does not imply a similar, cross-national consciousness. Moreover, historically, the trade unions have defended different sorts of interests: in terms of class, category, 'craft', nationality or race. In this regard important differences among countries have emerged and endure. The complex nature of interests is the first, general rationale for a comprehensive study of the attitudes of trade union activists. I shall investigate why, in similar work settings but in different countries, unions operate in different ways.

A qualitative case-study cannot offer a very extensive account of a broad phenomenon such as unionism. One has, therefore, to limit the aims and goals, although direct contact with the social complexity of the cases will, inevitably, raise a number of other issues.

The particular aim of this piece of research is to show the complexity of the interpretative resources (images, identities, representations) used by activists in the construction of their identity and to make sense of their situation. These resources have come, traditionally, from two sets of experiences: work experience and societal experience (sometimes mediated by subculture). Many sociologists have tried to classify models of workers' consciousness on these bases: either the kind of work done or the kind of society lived in.

Nowadays, it seems to be increasingly difficult to classify orientations according to only one set of factors. The experience of workers is one of complexity and change, no longer of unity and clear conflicts; this complexity is constantly contrasted with a memory of a clearer past. By stating this, I do not wish to imply that social reality has objectively become more complex: proving this statement would go well beyond the possibilities of such a modest piece of research.

Memory is always, and necessarily, selective. Social actors are usually prone, if not to the 'reactionary cult of the past' denounced by Marx, then at least to nostalgia. However, between working class consciousness as described by classical sociology and current trade union consciousness there seems to be a qualitative gap. It is impossible to measure change precisely, especially in a qualitative study. What can

be observed, however, is the current use of the past as an interpretative resource. This is relevant to the opinions of activists, either as a feeling of nostalgia or as generational fracture or as a perception of decadence or the need for change. We expect activists in Italy and Poland to construct a past on the idea of unity, and a present on the idea of difference. This feeling of disintegration makes the differences among workers *politically* more important, which contrasts with an economy which is increasingly integrated and globalised.

The idea of unity gave rise to high levels of solidarity. Whether the acceptance of difference will also do this is still unknown. Certainly there are currently trends among industrial workers (for instance the vote for extreme-right parties) that suggest a negative answer. However, it has still to be tested whether among rank-and-file members a reconstruction of identity, via the combination of old resources with new issues is taking place.

A higher level of awareness of the logic underlying trade union action can contribute to the understanding of which interests will be represented in which forms.

1.2. *Why a comparison?*

The choice of an Italy-Poland comparison does not justify itself automatically, even if one is interested in East-West comparative studies. The main rationale for such a comparison is the availability of similar work situations, in the same multinational companies, against the background of two different combative labour movements. These circumstances allow an evaluation of the respective roles of the current work situation and of past identity in the construction of trade union consciousness. Indirectly, such a comparison will contribute to the understanding of the communist past (which for obvious reasons has remained largely unexplored), and of its distinctive legacy in a Europe on the road to unification.

In other words, this choice of cases aims to control one set of experiences (the work setting) and to contrast as much as possible another, societal experiences, including ideological traditions. Italian and Polish union traditions can be opposed: a democratic trade union movement in a communist country contrasted with a predominantly communist trade union movement in a democratic country. At the same time, Italy was during the investigation the European country with the highest

level of investment in Poland. Notably, there are at least two cases (Fiat and Lucchini) of large industrial companies having comparable factories in both countries. These are the best places to observe the difference between East and West.

Moreover, there is a general reason for conducting comparative studies in multinational companies. When globalization becomes an economically relevant phenomenon, sociology should investigate how actors make sense of it. The attitudes towards each other of unions operating in the same companies in different countries could take the form of a stereotyping of the other or, alternatively, that of communication and exchange. A study of only the *interests* at stake would not be able to explain which one of these directions is more plausible.

1.3. Why activists?

The word 'activist', after that of 'militant', is also starting to be seen as archaic, and to have negative connotations. The institutionalisation and, often, bureaucratisation of trade unions has rendered activists superfluous to a large extent. In France, where the crisis of trade unions is particularly deep, Rosanvallon (1988) has suggested the scenario of trade unions not only without militants, but even without members.

However, the study of a country with high union bureaucratisation (Italy)¹ and a country with unions which are relatively weak in private workplaces (Poland) shows that, in spite of all, activists still exist. In fact, workplace unions could not survive without having a more complex relationship with the workforce than simply representation. The construction of union policies cannot be reduced to the representative/represented dialectic: this is why the reality of the trade unions never really conformed to Olson's theory of collective action. Workers' engagement is continuously constructed in the everyday practices of the workshops. It is not the outcome of individual, isolated choices. Moreover, rank-and-file workers maintain an autonomous role; they do not simply 'join' a given, pre-existing association. Without paying attention to the pressures from below it would be difficult to explain the change in political orientations of Solidarity in 1992 in Poland and the wave of spontaneous strikes in autumn 1994 in Italy.² Furthermore, the same job of shop-

steward generally in both countries, though not always, implies an availability and a personal engagement which cannot be ascribed to a 'bureaucratic' pattern.

That dictionaries do not yet offer a better substitute for the word 'activist' cannot justify a lack of attention to them. We should therefore speak of the 'transformation' rather than the 'end' of activism. To some extent, union commitment is becoming more 'voluntary' than in the past, because it is no longer due to subculture pressure. Thus it comes closer to other kinds of 'voluntary work'.

Following this perspective, the investigation carried out on the Italian and Polish union activists aimed to test three working hypotheses:

- that in both Italy and Poland the trade unions are experiencing the same crisis involving disintegration of a previously lively working class consciousness;
- that starting from the fall of communism new differences between East and West have been constructed at work and in the trade unions;
- that nowadays every union can be characterised by the way it copes with the central dilemma of how to deal with differences within the workforce.

These three hypotheses open very broad research questions. They will be defined and explained in detail in the next section. Later in the chapter, I shall explain *how* (with which methods) I have tried to answer these research questions.

2. Three hypotheses on trade union consciousness

2.1. Unity in the disintegration of working class consciousness

The search for a unitary working class consciousness among trade union activists from different countries is nowadays bound to be in vain. This point was made sufficiently evident by the exploratory phase of research carried out in Polish and Italian Fiat plants (Meardi 1996). On that occasion, I wanted to check whether, with the decline of ideologies, *in similar working situations, workers' consciousness displayed a 'principle of unity' despite deep historical and cultural differences*. The findings were clear-cut: very deep differences prevailed between the activists of the Italian left-wing *Fiom-Cgil* and the Polish activists of *Solidarity*, and both sides were unable to concentrate on work conflict as such.

The immediate sociological problem, then, is to account for such a differentiation, i.e. to define its forms. The hypothesis I suggest is that unity is not realised because the experience of work has largely lost its weight as a factor contributing to the collective identity of industrial workers. I shall examine whether this loss of weight implies a parallel process of disintegration of previous identities in both countries. In other words, the hypothesis is that a general disintegration is taking place on both sides of Europe; but behind this disintegration there is, paradoxically, a unity in the historical process involving the loss of the centrality of industrial work, in Italy as well as in Poland. This historical process allows differences (and in particular cross-national ones) to become more visible than in the past, when trade union militancy forged the 'meaning' of personal life.³ The same phenomenon has been noticed in the case of the French CFDT by Tixier (1992): the disappearance of the meta-representations which articulated work experience and class experience allows internal differences to appear.

The discussion of this hypothesis requires two separate arguments, regarding respectively the transformation of work and the cross-national parallelism of this process. I shall consider them separately.

2.1.1. The transformation of the experience of work and its effect on differentiation

The experience of work and working class consciousness

The comparison of similar plants in Italy and Poland shows that similarities in the work situation are not sufficient to foster a unitary or similar social consciousness. By contrast, the explanation of this fact will be more problematic. A number of existing works have pointed out differences in models of unionism, even between branches of multinational companies (e.g. Hofstede 1980; Sainseaulieu 1987; d'Iribarne 1989).

Is current differentiation stronger, or at least at a different level, than in the past? The inquiry which is presented here is not longitudinal across time; therefore, it cannot give an empirically grounded answer. Nevertheless, there is a way in which it

may support the hypothesis of a 'disintegration' of the experience of work as an element in the construction of collective identities.

We can contrast today's trade unions with the sociological and historical literature on work, class consciousness and unionism in the classic period of industrial society.⁴ Despite deep differences, this literature shows an extensive consensus on the role of the experience of work, although this role is often seen as indirect and far from exclusive. Unfortunately, qualitative cross-time research is difficult to conceive. The available data will be reviewed at the end of next chapter, but they are too fragmentary to be treated as 'evidence'. The discussion must be therefore kept at the theoretical level.

A definition of the 'experience of work' is imperative here. I do not mean by this term either 'professional experience' or 'employment experience': in these terms, work nowadays is increasing in importance rather than decreasing. I mean, by contrast, the set of relations of production. That is, the relations on the one hand between worker and product, on the other, between the worker and the organiser of his/her work.

I shall argue here that in industrial society, work relations were a significant element in the construction of identities. Therefore, workers of different countries, despite major differences in national systems and ideological orientations, displayed a comparable level of workers' consciousness. This does not mean that union and worker cultures were equivalent in all factories of the world: workers never really answered to the 1848 appeal for unity by Marx and Engels. Yet insofar as the most structural features of work relations were common, and the awareness of belonging to an industrial society was widespread, there was a core of common *working class consciousness*. I identify the three distinguishing features of that consciousness as:

- a link of collective solidarity;
- the awareness of a conflict between workers and organisers;
- a positive trust in industrial progress.

These three features may be respectively associated with the three broader components Identity, Opposition and Totality of Touraine's analysis of workers' consciousness (Touraine 1966). More important, all these elements are actually easily

identifiable in the oral data we have from the unions in the past. So spoke, for instance, in a long interview Cesare Cosi, militant of the Fiom in the Fiat Mirafiori factory, still in 1981.

'I have to say that I don't dislike my job. This also because I reflect on my job, I think how could it be modified, I discuss with the others on what can be changed. What we don't accept is that we must work for the boss. Everybody here in the factory has the feeling that a minority benefits from all the advantages of our efforts. We obviously hope in an autonomous work, in self-management, without a boss, this is the hope of everybody. Not because of money – the point is not that one – rather because we want to decide about ourselves and our future'. (Tatò 1981: 129)

In this short extract all three elements are clear: work identity, opposition to the boss, and a hope in progress. This statement, in 1981, might have been undersigned by any Solidarity member.

A common consciousness fostered a common identity, based on the image of the working class. In this way, what is usually seen as a structural and objective category (the working class) became relevant for workers as a cultural and subjective configuration.⁵

La conception syndicale de la solidarité n'a jamais été fondée sur ce qu'on peut appeler une théorie de la justice au sens propre du terme (...). Elle est simplement restée déduite d'une sociologie implicite, affirmant l'identité de la classe ouvrière, son unité économique et sa communauté de destin. (Rosanvallon 1988: 183)

The presence of a common 'working class consciousness', I should once again emphasise, by no means implies a unity in worker action. By contrast, action was so strongly influenced by national (usually political) cultures and by institutional systems, that workers' internationalism could remain only an ideological manifesto. Furthermore, working class consciousness must be analytically distinguished from a broader, political class consciousness and from a narrower worker consciousness. The former concentrates on economic development (Totality, in Touraine's jargon) and largely depended upon national features. The latter, worker consciousness, has only a very vague awareness of conflict (Opposition), and is closed to popular culture. This has often been defined as 'proletarian consciousness' or 'proletarian traditionalism' (Lockwood 1966).

Of course, not every worker displayed the levels of awareness, solidarity or trust implied by the definition of working class consciousness. However, as far as trade union members are concerned, this consciousness was a dominant feature and

the rare trade unions that did not display it could hardly be considered part of the union movement. It is here that the common element of experiences – in other respects so different – had to be searched for. We are speaking of a deeper (at the same time lower and higher) level than that of the concrete forms of union action. This consciousness was also present in situations where unions were forbidden, in other forms of conflict (e.g. slow-downs). At the same time, it was an immanent element of representations of society and of politics. At this deeper level, I assume that among Eastern and Western workers there was a similar perception of Identity, Opposition and Totality. This point was observed in Poland by Touraine's team (Touraine, Dubet, Wiewiorka and Strzelecki 1982) and has been partially confirmed by some comparative surveys (Cichomski and Morawski 1988).

The sociological debate on work

I argue that a substantial shift in the significance of work is taking place. This point requires some discussion, in order to avoid the risk of speaking nostalgically about the disappearance of something which never existed.

The meaning of work in today's society is a 'hot' sociological problem. The recent debate on the centrality of work has been extensive and marked by some emblematic titles such as *The End of Work* by Rifkin (1995). The discussion has been probably most vigorous in France, where it coincided with a deep social and political crisis. There are many arguments on the 'end of work' side⁶ as well as on the 'long live work' one.⁷ In Italy the most authoritative contributions, characterised by historical and political concerns, defend, though in different terms, the value of work (Accornero 1997; Trentin 1997; *Parolechiave* 1997), though not neglecting the increasing importance of the 'leisure sphere' (De Masi 1999). Yet this discussion, in any country, is sometimes misleading, since the word 'work' is given different meanings. Instead of opening such a debate, I would prefer to concentrate here on one particular aspect: individualisation and the subsequent decline of class identities at work.

Careers, qualifications, and contracts are less and less standardised, making work identities more individual and less collective (Dubar 1992). The sociological problem becomes the interpretation of this change. Many authors have analysed the

process of individualisation at work. Some interpretations (e.g. Brock 1994; Valckenburg 1996; Zoll 1992; 1996) differ from previous analyses which assume that individualisation is necessarily negative for collective action (e.g. Offe 1985): it is suggested that the individual might become a resource, at least if a new 'socio-cultural model' (Zoll 1992) develops. Some analysts go so far as to question the meaning of the private/public distinction as regards social commitment (Ion and Peroni 1997).

In this context my study asserts the 'disintegration', that is even more than the 'fragmentation', of the experience of work as *a source of collective identity*, and not necessarily the overall decline of work as an important sphere in people's lives. By contrast, a number of new issues linked to work but no longer to the working class (part-time, individual realisation, professional history, equality, discrimination) have become more and more important.

This issue has been taken into consideration throughout the fieldwork, and is analysed in chapter 5. However, it was impossible directly to investigate the role of work during the golden era of the workers' movement. For want of empirical foundation, the theoretical references have to be mentioned.

The role of the experience of work in constructing social consciousness has been shown by Touraine (1966). Later, while studying Solidarity, Touraine noticed that the main thing that Polish and Western union activists had in common was the experience of work relations (Touraine, Dubet, Wieviorka and Strzelecki 1982).

In different ways and from different theoretical standpoints, the weight of the experience of work is stressed by most Marxists (one could mention Marx himself) and materialist analyses of work conflict (Edwards 1986). The particular significance of the experience of work for worker solidarity (one of the features of working class consciousness) has been described by Zoll (1992): only that daily experience, and not the mere sharing of interests helps to build such a strong, everyday link between workers. The centrality of work helps to understand why worker solidarity has always been a *group* solidarity, rarely concerned with the enfranchisement of categories outside the working people (women, peasants, minorities, the unemployed). For a long period, the Left hoped that work would foster social integration into the working class. A manifestation of this (well-grounded but too categorical) belief was the quick

execution of 'proletarianization' policies by newly established communist regimes. Nowadays, the process of differentiation and segmentation within the working class and society generally calls for a reformulation of trade union consciousness beyond the role of work. Some unions, like the Italian Uil, have decided to define themselves as '*citizens*' unions'. Others, like Solidarity in Poland, emphasise *human* rights more than *workers*' rights.

Other authors agree on the traditional centrality of the experience of work for the construction of identities, although they doubt the 'unity' of such experience. For instance, Sainseaulieu (1977: 412-413) argued for the existence of a link between collective action and cultural learning experience at work. More precisely, cultural learning in the work setting involved a habit of sociability, and the latter involved, in turn, the development of collective action.

Obviously, critics of this assumption that the experience of work has lost its former centrality are not lacking. There is not the space here to discuss them in an exhaustive way, or even to mention a representative sample of them. I shall however consider their counterarguments, dividing them into three large groups.⁸

a) 'Life-sphere experience has always been more important than the experience of work'

This argument, which might undermine my assumptions, is implicit in some famous historical works, such as those of Edward Thompson (1963) or Katnelson and Zolberg (1986). These works argue that it was outside, and sometimes before, the experience of work that workers developed their consciousness.

Thompson's work is of particular theoretical importance for this thesis. He underlined the *making* of the working class, its cultural aspects, the role of consciousness. He reduced the importance of the classic distinction between the working class (as a given objective phenomenon) and the labour movement (its organisational form), a distinction that Touraine later tried to eliminate completely (Touraine, Dubet and Wieviorka 1984). Thompson's definition of class, furthermore, is particularly useful in the definition of Solidarity (e.g. Rychard 1988).

However, his main thesis conflicts with my previous assumptions. One solution lies in reading his criticism as directed at the *direct* relationship between

work and consciousness: the same relationship could operate indirectly, through the life-sphere experience, without invalidating my scheme. In addition, working class consciousness is considered here as only one of the possible forms of worker consciousness. Thompson's class concept is somehow more inclusive.

Other critics who contest the primary role of work underline the weight of the pre-industrial path in fostering ideological differences among workers (Mann 1973; Giddens 1973). Yet this view (about which there still is, by the way, an open controversy) probably explains, as do all societal effect or cultural interpretations, only a part of the trade union phenomenon.⁹

b) 'Societal and/or cultural factors were (and still are) the most important determinant of trade union consciousness'

In the past many have argued for the existence of different models of industrial relations and subsequently of unionism, although convergence theses (on the one hand, Kerr and most functionalists, on the other, most Marxists) have prevailed. Some of these arguments dealt with other (non-alternative) levels of analysis than that of consciousness, for instance bargaining systems (e.g. Clegg 1976) or institutional development (e.g. Crouch 1993). In this way, they argue for different *forms* of unionism rather than of class consciousness. Actually, most of these analyses *assume*, rather than deny, a clear and meaningful class cleavage. Few of them assert a deep differentiation between the ways industrial workers look at the social relations of production.

The theses asserting a radical difference between workers and unions of different countries mostly display a rough culturalism which contrasts with the basics of sociological analysis. However, this kind of argument acquires a particular strength in the case of the East-West cleavage. There are actually important works on the cultural specificity of Eastern Europeans (e.g. Maslowski 1995, Levada 1993). This point makes an East-West comparison more interesting, and will be discussed all through the thesis. I maintain the hypothesis that these cultural differences, albeit important, are not the most important factor. I shall argue below and in the next chapter why I maintain that Polish and Italian unions are comparable.

c) 'The experience of work was the direct determinant, but it is in turn so strongly affected by societal factors that, eventually, worker consciousness will not display significant cross-national features'

From a sociological point of view these are the most subtle critics. They do not argue that people are different or that they do not care about work, but that, as a complex societal mechanism, work is differently organised in each country.

There is rich evidence on the cross-national differences in human resource management (e.g. Lane 1989). The point here however is the consequences of these differences for the trade unions. An accurate theoretical and empirical discussion of the issue was provided by Gallie in his comparison of the French and British models of unionism (1978 and 1983). Gallie concluded that class consciousness depends on the experience of work, as a combination of the work setting and worker expectations. Yet since the work setting depends on management style – constructed in different national institutions – and worker expectations depend on the ideologies of political parties – characteristic of national political systems – finally national societies *through* the experience of work affect the nature of unionism. The British and French working classes are therefore profoundly different: the former engaged in bargaining and worried about the technical aspects of work, the latter antagonist, politically militant and concerned with the relational aspects of work.

It must be pointed out that political expressions are for Gallie the most important aspect of class consciousness. Yet my definition of working-class consciousness by no means presupposes a common political orientation (the comparison of the Italian and the Polish cases, ideologically diametrical, will make this point clearer).¹⁰ In fact, Gallie himself, by referring to Beynon (1975), defines the prevalent type of consciousness among British workers as 'factory consciousness'. That is, a consciousness involving collective solidarity at the workplace level, but with local objectives and weak identification with a wider working class. This kind of factory consciousness does not seem incompatible with the definition of class consciousness used here, if one remembers that British workers' identity is not so narrow. Although they do not believe in a meta-historical class, they are (or at least

were) quite able to distinguish classes, also outside the factory and when voting in national elections.

To conclude, the working hypothesis will be that *working class consciousness*, as opposed to just any kind of worker consciousness, has been decomposed. However, ideological expressions can strengthen even after the decline of the workers' movement. Concretely, this means that not only is the effect of the experience of work different in different countries, but also that it is increasingly difficult to isolate this effect in the cultural orientations of workers and union activists. If this hypothesis is true, we should expect, among trade union activists working in similar conditions, a deep variety of discourses on work, and a lack of direct links between the experience of work and union experience.

Workers and trade union activists in major industries are the best field to test the hypothesis of a transformation and disintegration of consciousness. They do not represent the whole of the productive world, but they are the *hard core* of the classic industrial working class. If change is detected *even* among them, the hypothesis of a general change will be proved valid *a fortiori*.

2.1.2. Unity in disintegration, or the paradoxical Italo-Polish parallelism

What is the point of making an Italy-Poland comparison on this problem? The usefulness of such a comparison is twofold. On the one hand, it shows that, since disintegration occurs in two such different countries, it is probably misleading to look for the causes of trade unions' difficulties primarily at the national level. This is not a particularly novel approach. For almost twenty years many scholars have been underlining the global character of the trade union crisis (for instance, on the basis of the general drop in unionisation rates during the '80s). It is not that surprising, therefore, that with the advent of freedom unions in post-communist countries have not found clear and strong patterns to follow.

There is a second, more profound reason, however. An interpretative analysis could show what in different countries is common to the process of disintegration. In this case, neither the points of departure (Polish and Italian trade unions have very different historical patterns and ideological traditions) or the points of arrival (the current developments are largely path-dependent) are common. Instead what is

common is the process of disintegration of what has been defined as working class consciousness.

There are, in the discourses of workers committed to the unions, repeated suggestions of the idea of decline, of a break with a previous model. In both Poland and Italy, radical as well as moderate activists display in their discourses a certain unease: a loss of reference point and a fear of fragmentation. If observed from a historical perspective, and if linked to the definition of working class consciousness presented above, this suggests the following hypothesis: *disintegration finds its unity in the breakdown of the image of the working class and the worker movement*. If elements of 'disintegration' were significantly diffused, and sufficiently time-referred (that is, implicitly or explicitly contrasting the present experience with the idea of the past), the hypothesis would be supported. This would mean that current reality is to some extent perceived using similar interpretative resources, inherited from the same pattern of working class consciousness. The historical process would therefore be, at least subjectively, comparable in Italy and Poland.

The association of this subjective evolution with the material trends of Italian and Polish societies is an open and complex sociological problem. A possible hypothesis is that the change in consciousness is linked to the shift from the industrial to the post-industrial society. Following such a hypothesis, we can say that it was industrial society that allowed the development of a working class consciousness. The incoming societal type, by contrast, would involve a process of differentiation and the substitution of social values derived from the sphere of production with those emerging from consumption and information. This hypothesis touches too large a sociological debate for treatment in this thesis. It is therefore better, for the moment, to speak only of a decline of the working class image of reality rather than of industrial society itself.

In order to make this hypothesis clearer, and despite the risk of oversimplification, it is worth contrasting working class and 'post-working class' consciousness. While in the former model the experience of work was the main determinant (either directly or indirectly) of trade union consciousness, in the latter the situation is much more complex. Work is no longer a decisive factor in the

construction of collective identities. Industrial production is no longer a positive value and workers are usually aware of a decline: they no longer hope to become the organisers of the factory.

This hypothesis of a parallel disintegration has a theoretical and practical importance. It explains why 'differences' are today seen by the unions as challenging and menacing, and why dealing with them requires a switch in general orientation, starting with a reformulation of the idea of solidarity (which will be discussed with regard to the third hypothesis).

'Unity in disintegration' denotes that the increasing visibility of national differences does not necessarily stem from an *absolute* increase in cross-national heterogeneity but from a *relative* one. Patterns of action differ primarily because former models no longer work. This is relevant in two separate respects:

1) the contrast with the background of globalisation: the globalisation of capital is quicker than that of labour; subsequently, international differences among unions have not become *deeper*, they have become *concretely important*;

2) the sharp weakening of the experience of work as a determinant of consciousness increases the relative influence of societal differences, even if these have not become stronger or have actually been reduced.

At the same time, individual differences become relevant. Of course, workers were only ever all alike in the iconography of socialist realism. However, individual differences were not relevant for trade union identities, since these were founded on similarity. As union leaders now sometimes acknowledge, for the unions individuality was not a resource but a hindrance.

2.2. A new East-West divide

2.2.1. A neo-proletarian consciousness?

This piece of research concentrates on a particular type of cross-national difference, that is, the East-West divide. In Italy and Poland unionism in the past embodied the workers' movement in a very ambitious way, although for a shorter period than in other countries. The reference to what I defined as 'working class consciousness' was one of the very few points which these two cases had in common.

For the rest, economic systems, and subsequently industrial relations and models of unionism, were deeply different.

After 1989, the thesis of a quick transition from the communist model (portrayed as unitary and coherent) to the 'market and democracy' model (also portrayed as unitary and coherent) prevailed in the analysis of the changes in Eastern European societies.¹¹ In the case of trade unions, this turned into the hypothesis of a 'convergence through the market'. This hypothesis was explicitly formulated, in a cautious and rigorous way, by Schienstock and Traxler (1993), but is implicit in most analyses.

My previous hypothesis of a parallel disintegration makes things more complicated. As a matter of fact, the current state of evolution confirms that convergence is far from automatic and linear. Something like an invisible iron curtain has endured in many aspects. Social dumping practices justify the fears of a '*Peripherisierung*' of Central and Eastern Europe (Dauderstädt and Meyer-Stamer 1995). The first nine Eastern European trade unions had to wait six years before being accepted into the European Trade Union Confederation in December 1995, and East-West co-operation is anything but easy. Even in the only case of perfect institutional convergence (German reunification), deep differences remain between Western and Eastern trade unions (Lattard 1995; Hyman 1996a), although convergence is taking place with respect to the role of works councils (Frege 1998).¹² In the case of the steel sector, it has been stated that from Western trade unions 'solidarity with Eastern European steel workers has been notable for its absence' (Bacon and Blyton 1996: 778). In the motor industry, moreover, the historic 'Eurostrike' at Renault in 1997 was limited in a way which has rarely been noticed: while the strike was successful in Belgium, France and Spain, there was no strike at all in the Slovenian plants. In Slovenia, there is no right to strike in solidarity (which is itself an interesting distinguishing mark of that system), but even had there been such a right it is very doubtful that Slovenian workers would have supported their Belgian colleagues.

The problem is that beside the disintegration of class consciousness, national models are also likely to lose their coherence. If the findings confirm this hypothesis, this will reveal a first shortcoming of transition theory, making it more difficult to

speak of two unionisms in the way that Gilles Martinet (1979) spoke of *sept syndicalismes* almost twenty years ago. Therefore, the process of change should not be interpreted as a shift from one model to another.

The main hypothesis to be tested is that the East-West cleavage remains significant but has changed its meaning. The recent experience of labour movements, in fact, is different. The breakdown of the existing model of unionism was experienced in Poland in a much more abrupt way than in Italy. Self-identity and trust that there was a 'stake' in the action (industrial development) suffered a more serious injury. Maybe even more important, deep bewilderment about the identity of the 'opponent' (no longer the state, not yet the private employers) followed.

The specificity of this evolution stems from a number of different factors. The immediate reason has to be sought in the totalitarian vocation¹³ of Eastern European societies. As well as denying any autonomy to the sphere of industrial relations under communist rule, this vocation still binds the concerns of trade unions more tightly to the general societal experience.¹⁴ Secondly, the current pattern of economic development in post-communist countries implies a more abrupt reduction of the role of industrial workers and is associated with an international division of labour in which Eastern Europe has become a low-wage area.

Until the '80s the industrial working class in Poland had a high-level self-consciousness, in the factory as well as in society (Gardawski 1996). Polish-American comparative surveys carried out in 1978 revealed a higher self-consciousness among the Polish working class than their counterparts in the United States (Kohn and Słomczyński 1988). This dramatically changed after 1989. The Italian working class has also ceased to occupy a central position, yet its decline as an economic and political actor was less sudden. In Poland, the crisis was sudden, deep and many-sided (Kulpińska 1995). Some of its consequences have been noted. From the economic point of view, the degradation of workers' living conditions has been ascribed the fall of productivity and of consumption, the delays in restructuring, and the growth of the informal economy (Amsden, Kochanowicz and Taylor 1994; Vaughan-Whitehead 1998). From the political point of view, industrial workers have started to be seen as a potential for non-democratic forces (Ost 1994). Yet apart from such comments on the

'consequences' of this crisis, little effort has been made to understand its real dimension and nature.

My hypothesis is that where the resources of the Eastern European working class, and particularly of trade unions, are not 'reconverted' or evaluated as positive, a 'neo-proletarian' consciousness emerges. This is due not only to a fall in standards of living, which at least in Poland have actually improved in the second half of the '90s. It may be better explained by the brusque disintegration of all the elements of working class consciousness.

The outcome is an ambivalence on the part of Eastern European workers. On the one hand, Eastern workers, whether they like it or not, are more aware of social changes than their colleagues in the West. On the other hand, when the crisis of their identity is too sharp, their reaction is a feeling of impotence and rebellion which is particularly unsuitable for union action. Furthermore, the experience of transition has involved a rough shift in the arguments used in the public sphere from moral or organisational to economic (monetary) categories. Workers are affected by the new importance of monetary relations and discourses, and pushed in this way towards economicism.¹⁵ The same divergent trend relative to the West has been observed in the emphasis placed on material needs by ex-GDR workers, as compared with the post-material needs of Western German workers (Lattard 1995).

This stress on material rather than post-material needs is only one of the features of what I call 'neo-proletarian' identity. The other is a deep pessimism (sometimes fatalism) and passivity, interrupted from time to time by 'explosions' of protest: the pattern of action familiar to industrial workers about one hundred years ago.¹⁶ The 'neo' prefix is justified by the fact that these workers are well aware of the historical phase they are living through.

This interpretation follows, although tentatively, because of the differences between the countries, some ideas already developed about Russian workers, who might be seen as an extreme, and therefore paradigmatic, case of proletarianisation. Clément (1998; 1999), having carried out some in-depth qualitative research, described how class consciousness is weak among Russian industrial workers: they rarely define themselves as workers, and when they do it is in negative terms: workers

are 'useless', 'dependent', or 'liable to be sacked at any moment'. Accordingly, three main features characterise workers' passivity: fear of social exclusion, exploitation, and subjective mess of identities. It has to be noted, however, that even for Clément workers' passivity is not absolute, as local, new forms of 'reappropriation' also appear.

The hypothesis of a new divide takes into account not only the changes occurring in the East, but also the smaller-scale transformations taking place in the West. It is linked to the general assumption that in a globalized world, space becomes an interpretative resource more effective than in the past when international relations were less relevant. In this framework, the attitudes towards each other Italian and Polish workers employed by the same companies becomes an interesting subject of research: do they follow a stereotyping pattern? Are they characterised by feelings of similarity, or rather of opposition?

One purpose of this research is to show how deep differences can emerge among interests groups dealing with similar situations. Multinational companies seem to be the best field to investigate it. They should be the main actors of the 'transition', transferring Western practices into the East. In fact, there is already strong evidence that they also 'construct' new differences (Jürgens 1995; Makó and Simonyi 1995; Makó and Novoszáth 1996; Tóth 1996a; Tóth 1996b; Kloc 1997; Meardi 1998b). These findings suggest that one ought to be more attentive to the interactions among social actors and seek other, less deterministic ways of understanding their action.

2.2.2. Toward a sociological approach

The economic explanation

In the analysis of the role played by the post-communist transition, one has to distinguish the sociological approach, followed in this study, from other possible interpretations which trespass into the fields of economics, anthropology and politics.

The simplest explanation of Eastern European basic economic demands, as compared to Western claims, refers to Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs. Following this explanation, which recurs implicitly in many industrial relations studies, relatively poor workers will concentrate on primary needs until their standard of living increases

sufficiently to allow more ambitious goals. However, the economicism of this psychological approach is able to explain neither the very high-level action and consciousness of Solidarity activists during the '80s nor the permanence of the 'neo-proletarian' pattern after 1993, when real wages started to increase again after a long negative trend. After all, workers' standards of living in 1980 were no higher than now. The fact that most workers judge their own current economic position as worse than under communist rule is not explained by the actual trend of real wages (now higher than in the '80s). More useful is the focus on change in the interpretative resources at the disposal of workers after the 'shock therapy'. Deprived of their concrete and/or symbolic role in the management of enterprises, in the economy, and in politics, they began to concentrate on a sphere (monetary relations) which suddenly became central to Polish social life.

Moreover, the situation in Eastern Europe is far from monolithic. Workers with the same income behave differently in different companies. At the same time, companies are not easily distinguishable according to the classic economic variables.¹⁷ More generally, any deterministic economy-based approach forgets that social actors are never *only* economic actors.

The anthropological explanation

The concept of *Homo Sovieticus* was until the end of the '80s a topic only for Soviet propaganda or for satire. Only recently was it raised to the level of scientific category (Levada 1993; Zaslavsky 1995) and widely used in order to explain the behaviour of post-communist workers. In its most sophisticated sociological version, it became a sort of 'socialist habitus' including the traits of political passivity, 'shadow economy' methods, and the use of an egalitarian rhetoric to hide social envy.¹⁸ One merit of this approach (but only in its best version) reposes in Bourdieu's observation that the habitus, as an internalised, semiautomatic mode of thinking and acting, is, in the presence of radical social changes, maladaptive and dysfunctional (Bourdieu 1980).

However, this approach sometimes evokes social Darwinism and neo-colonialist attitudes. In the most extreme cases, 'sociologists' arrive to prescribe for the Eastern European employees 'hard work, persistence, dedication and commitment

to organisational virtues' (Matejko 1994). Despite some partial evidence, the anthropological approach has in common with the economic one a disregard for the point of view of the actors. Culture is taken as a given, as an unexplained independent variable. The derivation of these explanations suggests the hypothesis that they represent rather a new ideology of the 'winners' of transition, who in order to justify their enormous gains forget inequalities of opportunity and denounce the backwardness of the losers.¹⁹

Certainly there are patterns of behaviour typical of post-communist workers, and they seem unlikely to change immediately. In a period of transformation, they are dysfunctional but, at the same time, they allow social actors to maintain some coherence, and not to disintegrate. Nevertheless, these patterns do also change and they are often not so different from those observed in the capitalist world. For instance, post-communist workers' resistance towards privatisation, far from being a legacy of the ancien regime, is actually no stronger than that of workers in capitalist countries.²⁰

If one wants to understand why workers' attitudes change according to time and situation, the assumption of the existence of predetermined human types becomes more of an obstacle than an explaining factor.

The political explanation

The last 'short cut' in the search for an account of the East-West difference focuses on the political level. In this way, 'micro' differences are viewed as springing directly from 'macro' differences.

The use of political factors as independent variables for the explanation of trade union behaviour arbitrarily assumes a one-way causal relationship. The political turning point of 1992-93 in Poland (the giving-up of radical market reforms) indeed had an effect on trade union behaviour; yet it stemmed from a change from below in trade union attitudes at the plant level (Kloc 1993). In such cases the evolution in the attitudes of rank-and-file members explains political changes better than the opposite. The emphasis placed on the political level brings with it the risk of misunderstanding. This happens not only in Poland, where basic concepts like Right and Left mean something different than in the West.²¹ The same may also occur in Italy, where for

instance the stress on 'autonomy' at the XXI Congress of the Fiom (1996) was largely read as a revival of leftist orientations, whereas on the ground the meaning was often a corporative one.²²

A more rigorous approach focusing on 'political' factors is the institutionalist one. It stresses that the implementation of political choices (such as economic liberalisation) depends largely on existing institutions. In this way it pays some attention to the 'human material' affected by political reforms. Yet this attention is often insufficient. The institutional approach becomes useful only if it takes into account that the same institutions can assume very different meanings in different social contexts. The history of tripartite boards in Central and Eastern Europe clearly shows how the introduction of similar arrangements does not necessarily involve similar results (Reutter 1994; Mouranche 1995). Similarly, the history of the European Works Councils shows that the creation of institutions from above is not sufficient to create cross-national solidarity (Turner 1996). Yet the best example remains the former GDR, where institutions identical to those in West Germany are not operating in a similar way (Hyman 1996a).

A sociological approach

There is not only 'one' sociological approach. The one suggested here, and described in detail in the next chapter, concentrates on the 'experience' of trade union activists. In the notion of experience (Dubet 1994), cultural patterns, institutional constraints and social-economic relations are connected from the point of view of the individual. Unlike the other approaches I mentioned, none of these factors is a sole determinant. The actor is seen as able to make sense of them and to actively exert an influence. What is usually defined as a simple, one-dimensional 'transition' should thus be defined, in Elias' words, as a 'civilising process', that is a crystallisation of shared life-experiences (or collective history). Furthermore, still following Elias (1983), rather than speaking of 'systems' in a comparison we should speak of 'configurations', abandoning the idea of closed and intrinsically coherent entities.

In the analysis of union activists' discourses, the focus will be neither only on 'culture' nor on external constraints, but on experience as the interplay between interpretative resources and social reality. As it has been observed about 'transition':

Bringing sociological aspects into this discussion means (...) acknowledging the importance of the interpretative patterns with which the actors of transformation perceive themselves. (Müller 1995: 284)

There are two general sociological approaches to the study of social movements. I cannot summarise here the debate on 'resources mobilisation vs. social identity theories'. I would only say that, even if this work is inclined towards the latter, there is no irreducible incompatibility between them, insofar as they focus on different levels of the problem. Basically, the latter inquires into the construction of preferences, while the former takes them as given and explains their translation into concrete action.

In other words, choosing a 'sociological approach' here means considering the East-West divide not as a legacy, but as something socially constructed and continuously reproduced and transformed in everyday experience.

Workers' interests and identities, as a matter of fact, are not given but are socially constructed. They have been differently defined in different contexts: as a class (against the class opponent), as a category (in competition with other categories), as a nation (the national 'holy alliances' against other nations), and also in ethnic and moral terms. By stressing the need to focus on the actor's consciousness during social change, it is stressed that interests and identities do change and that they are different according to the situation. In sociological theory, the relevance of identity has been stated by, among others, Touraine, Melucci, Pizzorno, Tarrow, Cohen, Habermas.

No union can function for a day in the absence of some rudimentary notion held by members that being a member is a value in itself, that the individual organisation costs must not be calculated in a utilitarian manner but have to be accepted as necessary sacrifices, and that each member is legitimately required to practice solidarity and discipline, and other norms of a non utilitarian kind. (...) interests can be met to the extent that they are partly redefined. (Offe and Wiesenthal 1980: 79)

In order to evaluate interests – that is, to calculate costs and benefits – the calculating subject has to be assured of an identifying collectivity. (Pizzorno 1985: 57)

Today, the boundaries of identities are changing both *within* workforces and *among* the workforces of different countries, and an investigation has become necessary. Particularly, the fragmentation made evident by economic globalization (to come back to the hypothesis of a new divide) has been noticed in the clearest way by the opponents of the class concept:

Given progressive economic and political globalization, such ultra-national interest alignments have become increasingly problematic. Collective economic interests in a globalized society cease to be fixed along national-class lines and cease to be seen as zero-sum. Broad regional or skill-based categories, rather than nationalised class categories, can become the most salient interest referents. French and German car-production workers may share economic interests with French and German employers (against, say, Japanese producers); skilled workers in Australia may share interests with high-tech Australian producers (against unskilled workers and primary producers). While there is nothing new in such cross-class interest alliances, their political salience has increased dramatically with globalization. In the past, such interest-divisions and alliances could be regarded as secondary relative to primary class divisions but not any longer. (Pakulski and Waters 1996: 679-680)

A 'sociological' approach, in contrast to monocausal explanations, should not be deterministic. It should be able to indicate both dominant trends and their conditions. In the hypothesis formulated above, the dominant trend among post-communist workers as compared to those in the West is neo-proletarianisation; conditions are in the first place the absence of the re-conversion or re-evaluation of workers' resources and the lack of communication with their counterparts.

2.3. The centrality of differentiation for the trade union agenda

2.3.1. The problem of cross-national solidarity

The crisis of the work-based pattern should push trade unions to other levels of action (primarily the political one) and to a more encompassing solidarity. This conclusion is the stronger for having reached from different theoretical standpoints (e.g. Crouch 1982; Touraine, Dubet and Wieviorka 1984). However, contemporary reality shows that this shift is far from automatic. A more 'encompassing' solidarity means dealing with two kinds of differences: within the working class and among national working classes. Trans-national differences become an interesting field for evaluating trade unions' attitudes.

The concern that unions develop strategies on international problems like European construction and the international division of labour is shared by many union leaders (e.g. Anderson and Trentin 1996 or Stainkühler 1989) as well as by many industrial relations scholars. It is enough to look at the number of titles containing words such as 'globalization', 'Europeanization', or 'cross-borders'. Normative statements such as the following have become common:

If they fail to coordinate their policy, centralise decision-making and merge together to form collective transnational European organisations, Europe's trade unions will be condemned to

pursue a policy of adaptation and retreat while competing against one another for scarce resources of jobs. (Visser 1995: 41)

Employee representatives must develop a unified, cross-border strategy towards corporate centres whose operations transcend national boundaries and sites. (Lecher 1994: 260)

Yet union strategy is not merely the object of theoretical deliberations. As a particular form of collective action, unionism cannot elude the identity question. That is, even if theorists or leaders achieved a theoretical solution for union dilemmas, the problem of understanding and interpretation on the ground would remain. And in the case of a gap between the rank and file and their leaders, the 'progressive' orientations of the latter could turn out to be a factor of internal weakness and mistrust rather than a new resource. If it is not subjectively understandable, the imposition of solidarity from above may easily backfire.

We have seen how working class solidarity was based not only on shared interests, but also on a common experience, and how it was mainly a group solidarity. In the current situation, a search for new solidarities must take into consideration changes in experience and consciousness.

The hypothesis put forward here is that of the *centrality*, and therefore *unity*, of the differentiation dilemma for the unions. This means that there should be a correlation between attitudes towards internal and cross-national differentiation among the union members of transnational companies.

Why there should be such a correlation? There are two main reasons. First, the problems of differentiation are logically (although not materially) connected. Secondly, the development of solidaristic attitudes across the traditional boundaries of the core working class requires a focus not only on the social relations of production, but also on other experiences. It must take into account the social framework: it would be impossible to simply claim equal salaries world-wide. Furthermore, within national borders, work is not self-sufficient: on the one hand, it is becoming less important for collective identities; on the other, it is to a large extent outside work that people familiarise with differences.

Looking beyond the workshop walls, in essence, should facilitate a reformulation of solidarity in all directions. However, there is a general condition for the applicability of this hypothesis. This is, that there must be some kind of common

experience, involving communication.²³ The problem is obviously more complicated for cross-national solidarity, since physical encounters are improbable. Yet in today's world, the possibility of an experience of globalization certainly exists, although it is usually mediated.²⁴

In conditions of late modernity, we live 'in the world' in a different sense from previous eras of history. Everyone still continues to live a local life (...), yet the transformations of place, and the intrusion of distance into local activities, combined with the centrality of mediated experience, radically change what 'the world' actually is. (...) Although everyone lives a local life, phenomenal worlds for the most part are truly global. (Giddens 1991: 187)

2.3.2. The Subject at work

Investigating the capacity of trade union members to deal with difference is directly linked to a more general problem, that of the recognition of otherness. If the reconciliation of identity and rationality is a major problem in the globalised world, it seems to need a recognition of otherness. Touraine (1992; 1997) calls this problem the 'emergence of the Subject', and there have already been some attempts to look at the possibility of such a reconciliation of rationality, identity, and recognition in the work situation (Ollivier 1996). A definition of the subject-worker is offered by Thuderoz (1995) as a combination of cooperative individualism (that is, the association of personal project and ability to weave social links) and experimentation with new 'social plays'.

This problem of the recognition of otherness is linked to other complex questions, first of all, with that of communication, an important field of speculation at the border between philosophy and sociology (Habermas 1981; Jonas 1984). In this thesis, the problem of 'Subjectivity' will be a constant concern insofar as the development of the 'Subject' at work seems to be linked to the trade unions' avoidance of an 'egoistic' (in the real sense of the word) professionalism.

As a space for personal projects, professional development, social relations and conflicts, work can be a space for the emergence of Subjectivity. At the same time, such an emergence requires a double emancipation from pure economic rationality and from communities. Subjectivity implies that the individual is not entirely defined by his/her social position (in our case, by the work situation). Becoming critical of one's own social position requires, therefore, a degree of

'exteriority', that is, the capacity to combine different experiences. On this issue of differences and individualisation there are some very optimistic views with regard to the unions and solidarity.

Le nouvel individualisme est l'expression de la situation existentielle de l'individu qui dispose du libre arbitre, celui-ci a donc la possibilité d'opter pour la solidarité quotidienne et pourrait par là même donner une base nouvelle à l'action collective. Si un renouvellement du mouvement syndical devait se produire, celui-ci partirait des nouveaux individualistes, des minorités syndicales, des femmes, des employés et des jeunes et trouverait son expression dans la vie de tous les jours, c'est-à-dire à la fois dans la vie privée, dans le quartier et dans l'entreprise. Elle dépassera les frontières entre groupes sociaux et aussi entre les syndicats en tant que mouvements sociaux anciens et les mouvements sociaux nouveaux. De nombreuses ébauches de ce mouvement existent déjà. (Zoll 1992: 154-155)

These optimistic views require investigation. It is here that the logical connection between the three hypotheses of my work lies: in the study of the possible reformulation of trade union identities by combining different experiences in the construction of a more encompassing solidarity.

2.3.3. Interpretation of change

Is the meaning of work really changing and becoming more individualised? A consideration of the literature suggests that the risk of overestimating change is greater than that of neglecting it. On the issue of individualisation the literature is huge (for their theoretical significance and for a belief in a positive potential of individualisation for the trade unions see especially: Valckenburg 1995; Zoll 1995; Ion 1997; Terrail 1990; Offe *et al.* 1995; Voß 1994; Linhart 1996; Pahl 1995). It is not only theoretical speculation. Voß for instance (1994) presents the evidence gathered in a large qualitative investigation on the interrelation between 'work activity' (*Erwerbstätigkeit*) and 'life-activity' (*Lebenstätigkeit*). The general finding is that in the post-Taylorist period personal strategies embrace all individual life, in an everyday practical construction. As a result, the distinction between work-sphere and life-sphere becomes more vague. Another qualitative empirical research project has been undertaken by Thuderoz (1994). His analysis of unions' representations of the firms shows how new multiform representations emerge, whether by rupture or by continuity.

Another emerging issue is the influence of gender relations. The presence of women in numerous cases is driving the trade unions towards a deeper tolerance of

differences and a greater attention to the individual. Similar observations can be made about young trade union activists, whose patterns of activism pressure the unions to move away from a class culture (Dörre 1995). In the Fiat plants in Melfi there is also some evidence of a peculiarly critical way of approaching the unions among young workers (Cappiello, D'Anella, and Placido 1996). Finally, the issue of trade union attitudes towards immigrant workers can also be approached in a way parallel to my study of cross-national differences. This is the case with a French study on racism at work and within the trade unions, carried out using Touraine's method of *intervention sociologique* (Bataille 1997). Its conclusions confirmed, among other things, that worker identity is no longer founded only on the experience of work, but relies on multiple cultural references. Consequently, taking into account both immigrants' identities and political/cultural factors has become a necessity for the trade unions at the workplace.

3. A qualitative methodological approach

3.1. Understanding by interviewing

3.1.1. The usefulness and shortcomings of the qualitative approach

From their beginnings, industrial relations studies have taken a number of different approaches, ranging from historical accounts to econometrics, with a lot of space given over to theoretical discussion. Over time, however, the role played by institutional agencies in the demand for research in this field seems to have promoted quantitative analysis more than other methodologies.

Quantitative methods of research in these subjects have indeed made enormous progress.²⁵ One problem, however, is that in a changing society the meaning of the indicators employed in statistical analysis must be periodically verified. In the example of strike action, it has been noted (Bordogna 1995: 171-172) that the expansion of the service industry makes the use of conventional indicators for the measurement of conflict misleading. When change becomes rapid and profound like in Eastern Europe after 1989, extreme caution in using quantitative data (from official statistics as well as from surveys) becomes obligatory. Staying with the example of

strike action, the unofficial habit of paying salary for strike hours (widespread until the law on collective disputes of 1991, but persisting in many cases in the following years) invalidates any quantitative analysis of industrial conflict in Poland.

There is another, general rationale for qualitative research on trade unionism. The meaning of unionism goes beyond the borders of the workplace and of the economic relationship between employers and employees. The asymmetry of work relations includes the fact that on one side they directly affect not only economic interests but also human life. And since human life retains a degree of complexity which can not be reduced to straightforward and measurable variables, we depend partially upon 'field' accounts to understand this aspect of the phenomenon.

Certainly, the shortcomings of qualitative methods are virtually as numerous as those of quantitative methods. Their criteria of validity and reliability are controversial, and sometimes researchers seem to be doing nothing more than 'aping' scientific methods.

Nevertheless, these techniques have a particular value. In this section, I shall attempt to show the usefulness of qualitative methods for theoretical development and for a better understanding of unionism. I do not, however, claim for them the validity of scientific method. The human personality of the researcher being a constitutive part of qualitative methods, and human personality being unstandardised, qualitative methods can only approach the scientific model, never reaching it. In reality, one could also be sceptical as to whether quantitative methods in the social sciences proceed on a scientific model. However, their less directly 'human' nature and their use of identifiable and standardised indicators and methods possibly bring them closer to it.

In short, I shall argue that quantitative and qualitative methods, in this as well as in other fields of research, are complementary rather than in competition, keeping in mind that on methodological issues 'the retreat into paradigms effectively stultifies debate and hampers progress' (Hammerslay 1992: 182).

The first part of the section will develop these arguments in the following way. First, I shall present a short review of qualitative research which has produced useful results in the field of work and unionism. Second, I shall consider the particular

method (unstructured interviews) chosen for this inquiry. Finally, I shall discuss some of the open issues in qualitative analysis for example criteria of validity and the treatment of data.

3.1.2. The tradition of qualitative studies of trade unions

If a pragmatic position is taken in the debate between methodological approaches, one should begin the defence of a given methodology by showing its achievements. Does this methodology offer findings that cannot be obtained otherwise? Or, at least, does it offer them at a lower cost than do 'concurrent' methods?

The answer to these questions is not so easy as might appear. In fact, it is sometimes difficult to ascribe the paternity of findings in social sciences to a unique approach. Sociologists working with statistical tools are often led, in their treatment of quantitative data, by assumptions obtained from secondary literature based on fieldwork, or by their personal familiarity with the topic. Any data treatment is to some extent 'qualitative': ethnomethodologists have shown very effectively how even natural scientists are inevitably guided by notions and practices rooted in 'common sense'.

Even if the border between methodological approaches is not clear-cut, it is possible to cite some examples of pieces of research conducted with qualitative tools (either exclusively or in combination with quantitative methods) that have undoubtedly contributed to our understanding of unions.

Among the general studies, one can cite Touraine's *Mouvement ouvrier* (1984), which, applying the qualitative method of 'sociological intervention', proclaimed the end of the workers' movement at a moment when this idea had not yet been accepted by most French sociologists and intellectuals. A good example of integration of quantitative and qualitative methods is Gallie's comparison of British and French workers (1978), in which semi-structured interviews are used to make better sense of surveys. In Germany, attitudes to work have been the object of qualitative research projects conducted by Rainer Zoll (1992). His findings, mainly based on interview data, form the basis of a rich theoretical discussion.

In Italy, the best analysis of the labour movement of the early '70s is probably that of Pizzorno's team (Pizzorno, Regalia, Regini and Reyneri 1978), which was based on some case studies and devoted a lot of space to oral sources. Even if the authors viewed the latter feature as a limitation, one can easily detect the crucial contribution of this kind of source in Pizzorno's analysis. Much more recently, an inquiry on the Melfi Fiat plants was carried out on the basis of fifty semi-structured interviews, and the authors themselves acknowledged the superiority of this method when compared to studies based on questionnaires which they also had carried out (Di Siena and Rieser 1996). Far away from Italy, the same conclusion is reached by researchers analysing General Motors workers in the US (Milkman 1997).

There are other qualitative traditions dealing with topics that, even if slightly different from the sociology of trade unionism, are connected with the same field. One of these is ethnographic work studies (Edwards 1992; Bélanger, Edwards and Haiven 1994a). Notably, and dealing with a problem similar to that of the current enquiry there is the work of Burawoy, and in particular his comparison of American and Hungarian factories (Burawoy and Lukacs 1985; Burawoy 1997). The conclusions of that comparison (the equivalence of the two situations, and even the superiority of the Hungarian organisation of work in some regards) have revealed themselves to be in large part wrong. This example stresses therefore the prudence one must use when using circumstantial and personal observation, and the importance of a continuous questioning of the starting hypothesis. Despite all these limits, however, Burawoy's work had an important theoretical impact, notably in introducing the concept of 'regimes of production'. The attention paid to theory is one of the most important features of qualitative approaches, and one which distinguishes them from journalism and anecdotal accounts. As Mitchell (1983) put it, in the case of qualitative research the issue should be couched in terms of the generalisability of cases to *theoretical* propositions rather than to *populations* or universes.

Another qualitative research tradition is oral history (Passerini 1988), which found important applications precisely with respect to Turin working class (Passerini 1984). Oral history uses in depth interviews in order to reconstruct particular moments of labour history. The positioning of such 'labour studies' between history and

sociology is difficult to define. Nevertheless, sociologists have contributed with their own work to this tradition (e.g. Stepan-Norris and Zeitlin 1996) as well as having explicitly appreciated it (e.g. Della Porta 1992; Yow 1994). More generally, one can recall the Chicago School, which made exemplary use of autobiographies and life-stories starting from the classic study by Thomas and Znaniecki (1927).

If we shift to Eastern Europe, a region where profound changes have taken place and many 'grey areas' persist, the need for qualitative studies increases. Surveys have become very popular here, but are often inadequate. The fact that they are at times still conducted on the phone, even though a significant part of the population does not own one, reveals the cultural and social distance that researchers have to cross before becoming familiar with their new subject. It is not surprising, therefore, that Western scholars usually have no better explanation for survey results on Eastern union members than the 'social schizophrenia' of Eastern Europeans (Blenchflower and Freeman 1994: 11). By contrast, in Poland in the '80s life-story interviews with Solidarity activists and members of the ruling elite showed an irreducible moral divide (Misztal and Wasilewski 1986). These findings predicted the failure of Jaruzelski's normalisation rather more accurately than surveys carried out at the same time, which showed a demand for order and a trust in the army (Adamski, Jasiewicz and Rychard 1986). As far as workers' opinions are concerned, the author of the only systematic surveys on Polish industrial workers, Juliusz Gardawski, himself admitted:

On the basis of qualitative studies carried out in the years 1991-94 at the same time as the questionnaire surveys, we could suggest that the problem of ideological attitudes cannot be satisfactorily examined by way of standardised interviews. (...) In order to obtain suitable information, it would be necessary to hold a relaxed conversation, conducive to retrospection, to identify and revive some latent states. (Gardawski 1996: 93)

The arguments about the utility of qualitative methods in research on industrial workers are particularly authoritative when they come from authors of quantitative analyses, like Gardawski, Rieser, and before them Blackburn and Mann (1975). They are all the stronger if one is concerned only with a specific segment like the union activists, because given the smaller size and the more elaborate consciousness the need for representativeness is reduced while that for interpretation is accentuated.

Qualitative research on post-communist countries has already proved its adequacy. Touraine's method of 'sociological intervention' allowed an understanding

'from within' of Russian trade unions (Berelowitch and Wieviorka 1993; 1996). These studies showed early on that the apparently lively independent miners' movement was declining and that, by contrast, the former official unions were succeeding in a process of reconversion. The same method was used to analyse unionists and employers from Central Eastern European countries (Frybes 1993; 1995). In the case of Polish industrial workers, occasional studies based on autobiographies have made a significant contribution in undermining the widespread stereotype of Eastern European workers as a passive group, and in revealing the importance of their personal choices and projects (Latoszek 1994).

Textbooks on methodology usually state that qualitative methods should be reserved for the exploratory phase of research, and that later on the intuitions of qualitative research should be 'tested' by quantitative analysis. Yet qualitative research may also 'test' hypotheses, whether by a choice of critical cases or through Popper's 'falsificationalism'. My experience, for instance, led me to conclude that a question used in a well-known survey on Fiat workers (Accornero, Carmignani and Magna 1985) as the determinant variable for constructing a typology, did not, in fact, have a link with the attitudes that this typology aimed to explain.²⁶

3.1.3. The interview and the unions

I shall consider here a particular qualitative tool, the unstructured interview, which is similar to the 'non-directive' interview introduced by Rogers (1945) into psychotherapy and the social sciences.²⁷ This method has met with considerable success, especially among sociologists with a liking for interactionism or committed to feminism (e.g. Oakeley 1981), but also among constructivists (e.g. Bourdieu 1996). It is the type of interviewing most concerned to avoid arbitrary suggestions and interference by the interviewer.

The interview is not simply a way of collecting data. It is also, and especially, a particular social interaction with its own features. This characteristic has given rise to an unresolved criticism of interviewing as a method in the social sciences. Yet interviews, in spite of such well-founded criticism, have not disappeared from social research. I shall argue here that this has occurred, at least in the field of labour studies,

because the limitations of the interview are at the same time a hardly substitutable resource.

[The interview] is irreplaceable to have access to undoubtedly interesting information, but it remains an unacceptable methodology from the point of view of the scientific ideal. (Blanchet 1987: 85)

It would be extremely naïve to treat interview answers as passive filters towards reality. Interview responses must not be seen as true or false, but only as displays of perspectives and moral forms. Therefore, this method is clearly unsuited to researching most kinds of behaviour or organisational phenomena. It becomes functional only when the aim is to understand cognitive frames of references and motivational processes. More particularly, as regards unionism, it can say little about internal organisational dynamics, and the accounts of historical facts can be artificial. Yet it can reveal the cultural and symbolic orientations of individuals, as well as the links between individuals and collective identities. It may at least partially open the 'black box' which, in statistical analysis, transforms social variables into social attitudes.

This method seems particularly profitable in the field of trade union studies because of some particular features of the subject. The features of the interview as a social situation vary according to different factors, but especially in relation to the topic and the relative status of the interviewee and the interviewer. It is intrinsic to the social role of the activist to be ready to give his/her own opinions. To be a union activist in a private company, furthermore, implies some degree of willingness to resist authority. When the interviewer is relatively young, clearly not very rich, and sympathetic (not to be confused with flattering), the risk of the interview becoming directive is reduced even further. My experience shows that union activists are very sensitive to any unintended attempts by the interviewer to dominate the interview (e.g. by summarising disordered answers). More generally, it has been stated that the interview

a toutefois de fortes correspondances avec des activités syndicales ordinaires (réunion syndicale où sont examinés des dossiers ou effectués des bilans des actions passées, rédaction des tracts, séances de formation syndicale, etc.). Le travail cognitif-discursif des acteurs syndicaux n'apparaît donc pas comme un artefact produit par le sociologue, mais possède bien un enracinement quotidien. (Corcuff 1991: 519)

On this point, interview-based comparative studies require some 'trick' in order to make sure that this power relationship remains the same in all the cases considered. All the external features (such as the environment in which the interview takes place) have to be controlled, although "it is virtually impossible to 'standardise' procedures in order to get similar results from different interviews" (Della Porta 1992: 184). Yet the problem of power relationships acquires a particular importance in cross-national studies in which the nationality of the interviewer might give rise to systematic distortions. When the researcher comes from an economically more powerful country (and what is more, from the country of the employer), the power position of the researcher is apparently reinforced. For this reason, as already noted by Hoggart (1957), workers may remain evasive when faced with an interlocutor enquiring into the popular milieu and recognised as a member of another social class. In fact, the opposite is frequently the case. The interviewee facing a foreigner has a knowledge advantage: (s)he can assume that the interviewer has little familiarity with the field, and that consequently almost everything can be told.

The 'tricks' to avoid national biases change according to the specific situation. In any case the familiarity of the researcher with the country (s)he studies seems to play a major role. A knowledge of the local language allows the heavy interference of an interpreter to be avoided. If (s)he shows some familiarity (*unique adequacy*, in Garfinkel's words) and links with the country, the risk of being treated as a kind of naïve tourist are reduced. On the other hand, the researcher interviewing in his/her own country should avoid too close an investigation with interviewees (for example, by stressing the international character of the inquiry or his/her own links with other countries). In this way, a major limitation of the social sciences may be partially overcome: the researcher might achieve a degree of the 'exteriority' demanded by the scientific model, and at the same time a degree of the familiarity required by the nature of social reality.

As already remarked, the 'unstructured' character of the interview should not mean researcher's passivity. Indeed, it has been observed that 'the passivity of the interviewer can create an extremely powerful constraint on the interviewee to talk' (Silverman 1993: 96). This involves a rather 'humanistic' approach which is difficult

to standardise since it exists only as an embedded feature in the unique interviewer-interviewee relationship. Its main features are attention, help in synthesising, intellectual support, and trust. This also involves 'listening skills'.

There can be little doubt that the commitment to explicating the subject's interpretation of social reality is a (one might even say *the*) *sine qua non* of qualitative research. (Bryman 1988: 72)

What is important is to leave interviewees free to speak about the topics *they* consider relevant for the subject of the interview. Precise questions which are theoretically relevant may be included, but should come at the end of the interview in order not to undermine its non-directive nature and not to trigger a question-answer relationship. The same point is even more valid for the collection of personal data.

3.1.4. The 'validity' of qualitative methods

Although we have seen that qualitative methods allow access to union members' views and orientations, their scientific validity remains an open problem.

The answers given by qualitative methodologists have ranged between two extremes. Some of them reject, in an extremist way, altogether the issues of reliability and validity, and with this any scientific model. Others have replied by developing their own lists of validity criteria (e.g. Mucchielli 1991). Most of these criteria have been criticised (see, for instance, a critical review in Silverman 1993), and they often reveal a defensive attitude on the part of their proponents.

I shall not discuss criteria such as internal acceptance, external acceptance, or triangulation, whose weaknesses have been already shown by Silverman. More useful, even if they can also be defined as departing from a truly scientific model, are the criteria of saturation and coherence.

Saturation is the phenomenon that appears when the data one is collecting are no longer new. That is, a qualitative inquiry on n members reaches saturation when the interview of $n + 1$ member does not give any supplementary information relevant to the research questions. Since a statistically representative sample may hardly be attained in qualitative research, (and, given the goals of this methodology, it is not necessary), saturation would substitute for it: '*lorsque la saturation est atteinte, elle confère une base très solide à la généralisation*' (Bertaux 1980: 208). This 'criterion'

is, however, far from irrefutable. Firstly, it depends on a subjective evaluation of the 'novelty' of the information. Secondly, statistically the fact that the $n + 1$ interview repeats the features of previous interviews by no means precludes the possibility that $n + 2$ will be completely new. I prefer, therefore, a 'softer' version of this criterion: a qualitative study reaches saturation when a deep *familiarity* with the population is achieved, such that any new information can easily be understood and related to individual particularities without changing the way in which the group is represented.

Internal coherence as a validity criterion is a logical construction. Qualitative analysis is 'coherent' when, in short, it makes coherent sense of the data, a sense which is understandable to (although not necessarily shared by) other researchers. It assumes that once the researcher has succeeded in apprehending the point of view of the actor he is studying, this can be understood by anybody (assuming that the presentation of the findings is clear). This is, rather than a true criterion of validity for qualitative research, a core feature of interpretative sociology. For instance, Weber's ideal types are useful for sociology not because they are empirically 'valid', but because they are a coherent representation of behaviours and orientations.

Other methodologists, rather than speaking of 'validity criteria', prefer to talk of general orientations or strategies like analytical induction (Robinson 1951) or grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967). The former implies that the researcher has to redefine the hypothesis and return to the field any time a single case inconsistent with the hypothesis appears. This seems to encounter problems similar to those met by the criterion of saturation. The latter strategy is indeed a general sociological strategy, not exclusive to qualitative research. Its main feature is to 'mesh' theorising and data collection, so that the hypotheses are continuously redefined.

From this very incomplete discussion what emerges is a certain confusion about the actual validity of qualitative studies. This is likely to be the result of the confusion about the aims of qualitative research.

No 'criteria' will could grant qualitative methods a scientific nature. Nevertheless, these methods hold an irreplaceable role in that they offer access to some kind of information and, more generally, to common sense. This common sense

is relative to each group ('indexical', in the jargon of ethnomethodologists) and makes sense of its expressions, orientations and, sometimes, its behaviour.

I shall be considering the case of interviews with union activists. By analysing how people talk, direct access is gained to a cultural universe and its normative assumptions. The accounts are not reality; yet they are a part of the world they describe (Garfinkel 1967). In particular, interviews give us access to the repertoire of narratives that we use in producing accounts (Gilbert and Mulkay 1983).

In other words, reality is always viewed from a particular perspective; hence our accounts *represent* reality, but they do not *reproduce* it (Hammersley 1992: 50-51). If we study collective actors, we must investigate not only 'facts' but also representations; and it is here that qualitative methods come into their own.

This argument has been discussed widely in the case of interviews with workers who clearly do not always tell the truth (Weller 1994). A first outcome of this consideration is that the existence of inconsistencies between the views expressed in interviews and actual action suggests that the assumption of coherence between rationality, representation and the logic of action which underpins much industrial sociology needs to be revised. What is more, however, is that it is possible to reconcile subjective accounts and sociological studies.

A reference to Goffman's work is very helpful here. Goffman developed a theory of identity that took into consideration the breakdown of individual coherence (Ogien 1987). By distinguishing the notions of *Self* and of *Face*, he showed that individual existence is the expression not of an essence, but of a 'face work' (Goffman 1967). The *Self* is embedded in a multitude of territories, and the territorialisation of the subject removes the question of essence. It is the concrete ability to unify reality and to transform the scene in a coherent way which seems to make up the actor.

The construction of *Self* during the interview is consequently not a lie, but the fragile but real result of a coherence (the face work). This coherence is visible in what the interviewee *knows*. This set of knowledge, skills, and references (the *Lebenswelt* of phenomenological sociology) allows then actor's multiple positions, which vary according to contexts and situations, not to break down. Drawing on this point we can

say that more important than the statements (which may be true or false) are the frames of reference (which are necessarily meaningful). Analysing actor's identity means then for the sociologist analysing the 'political wisdom', taken not in an objective sense but in an endogenous one (Pharo 1985). The internal relations of narratives are more important than their relations to the 'objective' reality.

Interviews (like other narratives) display cultural particulars - which are all the more powerful, given the connections which members make between them. (Silverman 1993: 114)

Concretely, in the case of trade unionism interviews are not objective accounts of workplace industrial relations. However, they reveal the cultural resources and orientations used by the actors. Since these are collective resources, and the language they use is necessarily 'social', even a non-representative sample can unveil the group culture. In other words, while it is obviously possible that the opinions of a qualitative sample do not represent the opinions of the larger group, it is hardly imaginable that language, references, styles, and ways of arguing are not shared by the other members. This would be to imply that social actors (in our case union activists) do not understand each other when they meet, which is evidently false. As regards workers' culture it has been actually stated that:

Conversation, dialogue, oral account are a part of a system of cultural exchange, enriched by variations which link the word to the cultural models typical of every social group. Consequently, the communicative structure that feeds talk is, sociologically, a totality in which one must notice, with the semantic fields, the correlations which link these fields to wider areas of experience. (Crespi 1997: 12-13)

Another problem of qualitative methods concerns the choice of the cases and, in interview-based research, the interviewees. Is it possible to choose cases in a way that allows for some generalisation? First of all, as already argued, the kind of generalisation allowed by case-studies and qualitative research is a theoretical, not a statistical one (Mitchell 1983). That said, in the field of ethnographic studies of work five ways to generalise the findings of case studies have been proposed (Edwards 1992):

- a) the discovery of hidden forms of behaviour (which is as such a general-value finding);
- b) the identification of critical cases;
- c) the exploration of causal mechanisms linking phenomena;

- d) the explanation of variations (especially of deviant cases);
- e) the understanding of the nature and the sources of variation.

One could certainly question the validity of some of these proposals. The fifth is tautological, while the third and the fourth stress the depth of the findings rather than their generalizability. The first one is valuable, but applies only to a limited set of findings. The second one, the identification of critical cases, seems, however, a very important way of proceeding, especially in comparative research. In this respect qualitative methods may be more rigorous than quantitative studies, since they reproduce the high level of complexity of societies that is often concealed by quantitative studies, which reduce cases to a limited set of numerical indicators.²⁸ In cross-national comparative studies, moreover, the issue of generalisability can partially be faced by choosing more than one case per country.

Choosing a matched set of workplaces is an especially useful technique for comparative analysis. It is a good way of eliminating several confounding variables in a qualitative study, as long as the researcher is careful to acknowledge what can easily be controlled and what cannot. The two-by-two (or three-by-three) comparison is especially versatile. The movement beyond a single set allows for a much greater ability for generalise, yet the small number also allows for the intensity of ethnographic investigation. (Bélanger, Edwards, Haiven 1994b: 277)

As regards the selection of the interviewees, random sampling is usually impracticable. Choice thus depends on the relevance of individual experience, or on the expressive capacities and interest in the research (Della Porta 1992: 182). Certainly, diversity is as important in these methods as representativeness is in surveys: the main social types (e.g. generations, genders, professions) must be represented in the sample. In the case of union activists, moreover, the problem of representativeness might be partially faced by the assumption (arbitrary but realistic) that workers willing to talk to the researcher are *intrinsically* representative of union commitment. Indeed, such a willingness is not always immediate (interviewing is not a part of union activity), therefore the quality of the sample will depend, once again, on the bargaining abilities of the researcher.

3.1.5. The treatment of qualitative data

Besides the problems of validity, there are further difficulties concerning how qualitative data are treated, analysed and interpreted. What can we infer from the jungle of qualitative data?

A first problem is how to systematise and present the number of interviews. The usual way this is done has been strongly criticised.

There is a tendency towards an anecdotal approach to the use of 'data' in relation to conclusions or explanations in qualitative research. Brief conversations, snippets from unstructured interviews, or examples of a particular activity are used to provide evidence for a particular contention. There are grounds for disquiet in that the representativeness or generality of these fragments is rarely addressed. (Bryman 1988: 77)

Silverman (1993: 110-114) presents two strategies to overcome the dangers of subjectivity and partiality: tabulating many cases and investigating deviant cases. Della Porta (1992: 184-185), in turn, suggests two possible solutions: analysing interviews with the help of quantitative methods and publishing the interviews as they are recorded. Yet she immediately asserts that both seem too radical. In this regard, as in that of validity criteria, those with ambitions to reach scientific standards are probably deluded: interpretative analysis can hardly be schematised on a grid. Instead, it is possible to argue for a systematic and reliable presentation of the data. The inevitably subjective presentation (qualitative methods are altogether subjective insofar as the researcher becomes a part of the process of data collection) should be organised by issue and topic, so that all the relevant statements about relevant points are taken into consideration. Secondly, the data (in this case, the interview recordings and transcriptions) must be available for secondary analysis. That said, the strategies suggested by Della Porta can partially be applied: including the full transcript of a few interviews can illustrate both the methods and the coherence of the findings, and statistics can be used, with discretion, to synthesise and organise the data.

The problem of reliability raises another important point. Since the way data are collected can bias the findings so profoundly, there is a strong need, even stronger than in quantitative studies, to detail the relevant context of the enquiry. It becomes all but useless, therefore, to recall Merton's appeal to include in publications

a detailed account of the ways in which qualitative analyses actually developed. Only when a considerable body of such reports are available will it be possible to codify methods of qualitative analysis with something of the clarity with which quantitative methods have been articulated... This codification is devoutly to be desired both for the collection and the analysis of qualitative sociological data. (1966: 444)

This reflexive work is important for more than methodological reasons. All the phases involved in access to the field reveal much information which must become an integral part of the piece of research (as Mehan's cognitive ethnology suggests). From

my experience, I can state that the way unions receive the researcher is a fairly good indicator of the type of union. Such 'marginal' observations achieve sometimes an unexpected degree of scientific validity. For instance, the fact of having been received – as an Italian researcher – very warmly by activists of the unions which are considered the most nationalist and anti-Italian falsifies the theory which views xenophobia as a main feature of today's Polish unions.

3.1.6. Methodological integration

This section is not intended to be a mystical defence of qualitative studies. I have argued that their suitability is limited by research aims and topics. Trade unions are complex phenomena, and while quantitative methods can successfully portray some aspects of their 'macro' behaviour, things change if one is interested in the deeper orientations of their members, even if one would not go as far as one attentive analyst of working class consciousness.

Qualitative techniques alone, among sociological research methods, are capable of uncovering the relationship between attitudes and actions that is class consciousness. (...) It is difficult to see how the shortcomings of social surveys, as a means of studying class consciousness, can be overcome (...). It is not that qualitative research of the kind here advocated *complements* surveys in this field. Rather, such research provides a more suitable *alternative* to the large-scale survey. (Marshall 1983: 290-91)

Marshall's dismissal of quantitative methods is not fully justified. A moderate view would be that there is a need for an integration of methods in sociological research. Statistical analysis requires some degree of familiarity with the data: there is something 'qualitative' also in the choice of statistical tests. At the same time it has been observed, with some irony:

By our pragmatic view, qualitative research does imply a commitment to field activities. It does not imply a commitment to innumeracy. (Kirk and Miller 1986: 10)

This piece of research, consequently, will not disregard the opportunity for a quantitative treatment of the data. At the same time, references to surveys will integrate qualitative studies in order to offer a cross-temporal and multinational picture of the topic. One of the aims of this project is to allow, through qualitative research, a better understanding of surveys.

One last question, however, can be asked: in the final analysis, are qualitative methods a part of the social sciences, or are they instead simply common sense?

Certainly, qualitative methods strongly reduce the epistemological fracture between scientists and lay actors. In the field of unionism this epistemological fracture is almost closed: union actors use a number of interpretative resources borrowed from the social sciences, so that a process of exchange between the social knowledge of scientists and actors is instituted (Corcuff 1991). This is, in my opinion, not a limit but, conversely, a merit. It describes two major social facts: the interpretative and cognitive capacities of social actors, and the embedded nature of the social sciences. Besides, even famous sociologists nowadays agree that:

there is no clear dividing line between informed sociological reflection carried on by lay actors and similar endeavours on the part of specialists. I do not want to deny that there *are* dividing lines, but they are inevitably fuzzy, and social scientists have no absolute monopoly either upon innovative theories or upon empirical investigations of what they study. (Giddens 1984: xxiii)

Yet the distinctive feature of qualitative methods in sociology, as compared to journalism and members' accounts, lies in the commitment of the former to theoretical concerns. While describing unions and plants, unlike a journalist, I shall continuously raise questions which go beyond them.

3.2. Understanding by comparing

3.2.1. Comparative thinking

Every year a couple of comparative books on industrial relations and on trade unions are published. Among these works, there are studies which manage to 'put in order' international chaos according to a set of clear hypotheses. A well-known example is Clegg's analysis of six countries, based on the forms of collective bargaining (1976). Much more common, unfortunately, are simple juxtapositions of national monographs. These are often valuable sources of information, but they compare the 'whole' to the 'whole' without building either an analytical grid or an explanatory framework.

This is the classic problem of comparison, about which there are two basic and opposed viewpoints. The first stresses the irreducible complexity of every national case and therefore the impossibility of term-to-term comparison, especially in East-West comparisons: 'First understand, and then, but only then, compare' (Bate and Child 1987: 33). On the other side, since the beginnings of sociological thought the

contribution offered by comparisons to the understanding of the same singular cases has been emphasised. Durkheim's declaration in the first page of *Suicide* '*on n'explique qu'en comparant*' was maybe too categorical, but it undeniably inspired much of the ensuing sociological elaboration.

Are East and West too different? Sure, but only comparisons can tell us the actual depth of these differences. Precisely the difference among the cases allows to distinguish the unity of a sociological problem, in this case the way in which trade union activists relate to the work situation and to history. Certainly, the discussion of the findings will have to take into consideration the complexity of international comparisons. Among the factors which differ, the external (national situations) will have to be distinguished from the internal (differences related to the workplaces, which even if similar are not totally equivalent). Although complicating our task, the complexity of international comparisons has the value of connecting sociological analysis to other approaches and fields like history, political science, and ethnology (Casassus-Montero 1989).

3.2.2. Rationale for comparison

What I present is not a comparison of 'whole' national systems. Instead, it is a selection of a particular, comparable field (similar working situations in two different countries) and a particular issue (trade union consciousness). This was an attempt, if an imperfect one, to investigate the influence of a set of variables in a way inspired by laboratory practices in the natural sciences.

Italy and Poland make useful subjects for an inquiry into the role of the East-West cleavage in the transformation of trade union consciousness. In the not so remote past, trade unionism in both countries embodied to a very high degree the characteristics of a social movement. Yet opposed political traditions (as previously mentioned, a democratic trade union movement in a communist country contrasted with a predominantly communist trade union movement in a democratic country). The loss of the social-movement perspective involves a detachment from the old models. The question must be whether subsequent trends are convergent, at least when the features of the work situation clearly converge. The choice of comparable working

situations within the same multinational companies attempts to provide a 'critical case' where differences are easier to detect.

The comparison makes possible a discussion of all three hypotheses formulated in the previous section. It should show the permanence of deep differences, alongside the presence of a common nostalgia for the past. The findings should also confirm that the East-West cleavage explains differences both objectively and subjectively. By becoming an interpretative resource used by actors, the East-West distinction reinforces the cleavage itself. Finally, it should become clear that differences between Italy and Poland are made stronger by a new interplay between life-sphere experience and the experience of work. Subsequently, it can be observed whether attitudes towards differences in the life-sphere are in any way connected with cross-national attitudes.

There are several approaches to comparison in the study of trade unionism. Maurice (1989) distinguishes three broad approaches: functionalist, cross-cultural and societal. The last assumes that actors are socially constructed within their relations to society, and pays attention to multiple, interactive causality in the micro-macro interplay. This is the approach I shall follow here.

The choice of national cases is quickly explained. Poland is, among post-communist countries, that with by far the strongest worker movement. Italy is, among Western countries, the only one with a legacy of a communist-oriented worker movement and a degree of economic integration with Poland allowing the choice of comparable industrial cases. These are countries where the *forms* of unionism were similar: in both cases competitive, ideological, combative, weakly institutionalised and with a visible social movement vocation. One can point to similarities in the experience of works councils (Poland 1956, Italy 1968), in their egalitarian orientations, in their links with intellectuals since the '70s, and above all in strike behaviour. One feature of union structure which is very telling with respects to union orientations (especially their level of centralisation and their strategies) is the presence of strike funds (Crouch 1982), and neither Italian nor Polish unions have ever had them. The comparison between these two countries is therefore easier than between, for instance, the United States and Czechoslovakia or between Austria and Hungary.

Poland is not representative of the East: it was the least totalitarian country in the Soviet bloc. Neither is Italy representative of the West: in fact, it has even been argued that:

In domestic political polemics Italy has often been described as the Western country with the highest proportion of elements of real socialism. It is a country, therefore, that may constitute (even though scarcely aware of it) an important 'reference society' for the European post-communist countries inasmuch as it illustrates how the state and market can collaborate against both tradition and modernity. (Grancelli 1995: 3-4)

However, if one is interested in testing the hypothesis that the meaningfulness of the East-West divide has endured, albeit that the content of that meaning has changed, these two 'close' cases are very suitable for validation purposes. Further, the 'visible' social movement past allows a more rigorous testing of the hypothesis of a disintegration of the social movement consciousness.

There are, moreover, secondary features (religion, industrial development, party systems, low institutionalisation, recent adoption of liberal economic policies...) which make these two cases even more comparable.

Within these two national cases, I have studied two industrial situations which lend themselves to the testing of the hypotheses: the Fiat plants (of Turin in Italy, of Tychy and Bielsko-Biala in Poland) and the Lucchini steelworks in Piombino and Warsaw. Moreover, a few 'control' cases are also considered.

3.2.3. Are Poland and Italy comparable overall?

Comparisons exhaust their usefulness when the terms are too different. This does not seem to be the case with industrial relations in Eastern and Western Europe. Books on post-communist industrial relations are constantly concerned with the issue of 'convergence' with the West. In multinational companies, human resource management tends (or at least claims to tend) to uniform policies. There should be, therefore, no reason for these cases to be incomparable. The situation of Eastern Europe is certainly peculiar, this is, rather than an obstacle to the comparison, the real reason for interest in such a comparison.

A particular problem (which I shall deal with in more detail in the next chapter) is whether the *past* of Italian and Polish trade unions is comparable. The homogeneity of Eastern and Western societies has been a delicate sociological

problem for a long time.²⁹ When I say that in both cases we are witness to the disintegration of working class consciousness I am referring in particular to the observation made by Touraine, the only Western scholar to have carried out fieldwork on Solidarity in 1980-81.

[Pays capitalistes et communistes] dans la mesure où ils appartiennent les uns et les autres à la société industrielle, connaissent le même rapport de classe central, celui qui oppose les travailleurs, avec leur force, leur qualification, leur expérience et leur solidarité de groupe, aux organisateurs, aux chefs, qui leur imposent un rendement, une cadence, des conditions de travail, un système de rémunération et qui les exploitent. (Touraine, Dubet, Wieviorka, and Strzelecki 1982: 72)

This interpretation directly raises complex historical and sociological problems, which will be analysed more closely in the next chapter.

If we shift to the particular field chosen for research (Fiat and Lucchini factories), the comparability of past experience is more striking, primarily because of the similarity of the 'opposing actor'.

The Polish FSM factories in Tychy and Bielsko-Biala have produced cars under Fiat licence since the '70s, long before being taken over in 1992. Even if they remained absolutely typical Soviet-type factories, the closeness of the opponent had surprising consequences. In 1980, trade unions from Turin started a program of 'twinning' with another Polish factory working under Fiat licence (FSO in Warsaw). This twinning was indeed an asymmetrical relationship, and Italian trade unionists (as I discovered from my personal interviews with the protagonists) sometimes found speaking about 'workers' matters' problematic, because the Poles were concerned with 'higher' issues. Yet it gave rise to strong solidarity and to a recognition of mutual interest. Moreover, in the accounts of Jaruzelski's coup-d'état (13 December 1981), the most generous to the regime among Italian newspapers was not *l'Unità* (organ of the PCI) but the Agnelli-owned *la Stampa*.

In the case of the Lucchini steelworks, both factories studied were state-owned until 1992. The management of the Piombino plants (and of the whole town, considering that all mayors since 1945 were communist, and then PDS) displayed striking similarities with state-socialist practices. This point is important in recalling that the opposition of clear-cut models (West=market vs. East=state) is often misleading.

One final problem is how to generalise to the national level from observations made at the plant level. A first procedure is to choose a three-by-three comparison,³⁰ which allows a better generalisability than the analysis of singular cases. On the Polish side, which is less well-known than the Italian one, other theoretically relevant control 'cases' have been observed: the choice has striven to include 'extreme' cases, theoretically relevant for the validation of hypotheses *a fortiori*. A second procedure is to link the fieldwork to a review of the secondary literature and of national-level survey data (which also allows some cross-time comparison).

Unfortunately, most surveys on the topic are either too general or hardly comparable. The popular *Eurobarometer* does not include non-EU countries, and its *Central and Eastern Eurobarometer* supplement is devoted only to European Union issues, with questions different from those asked in the West. The only analogous questions are so general (about economic performance) as to impede any speculation. Moreover, the *Eurobarometer* sample size is too small to deal reliably with subpopulations such as industrial workers.

Other surveys are more interesting but have been carried out in only one of the countries, and it is risky to compare data from different surveys (questions may be asked in different ways and methodologies may differ). For Poland, the data from the *New Democracies Barometer* conducted by the Paul Lanzarsfeld Society of Wien and the *Poles* series since 1980 carried out by the University of Warsaw are interesting and methodologically rigorous. Moreover, on the particular topic of industrial workers the surveys carried out by Gardawski and others (Gardawski 1996; Gardawski, Gąciarz, Mokrzyszewski, and Pańków 1999) have proved to be invaluable sources. For previous periods, other surveys (Kolarska-Bonińska and Kosela 1994; Koralewicz 1987; Ziolkowski 1990) are useful. For Italy a relatively recent review is that of Golden (1990b). In the Fiat case, an important source is the already-mentioned survey carried out in 1980 (Accornero, Carmignani and Magna 1985).

A major comparable source for the recent period is the 1997 International Social Survey Programme survey on work orientation, whose data have been published too late to be considered in this text. This survey should allow, among other things, an evaluation of the particularity of our two cases in relation to other Eastern

and Western countries. Previous modules on social inequality and the role of government have already given rise to some work on industrial relations (Blanchflower and Freeman 1994). However, it is also the case the subpopulation of industrial workers and union members in these surveys is too small to permit the construction of statistically reliable models with more than a very few variables. For the past, comparable surveys are available for 1984 (Cichomski and Morawski 1988) for Italy and Poland, but other East-West studies also turned out to be useful (e.g. on Poland and the USA, Kohn and Słomczyński 1988).

3.2.4. Common sense and social science

This study is not an inquiry into the actual 'opinions' of trade union members: if this were the case, the method would be different and the sample statistically representative. This study is rather interested in the way actors build their identity and account for their activity. The resources used to 'communicate' identity and choices must be, to a certain extent, 'collective', 'social', 'indexical': this is why even a non-representative sample can offer valuable results.

According to the methodological orientation sketched in this section, the actors should become the real analysts. It is implicit in interpretative sociology that actors are able to make sense of their situation: they are not just 'cultural idiots', condemned to repeat orientations imposed by some kind of superstructure.

Which kind of knowledge, then, can be added by a sociologist, if members are already able to understand and describe? Just a collection of common accounts?

Even if this work were a simple collection of common accounts, this would not be totally useless, given the still very unequal access to expression in modern societies. However, the real contribution a sociologist can make lies in comparative reflection. Having some degree of exteriority, and more time for theoretical reflection, (s)he can compare the accounts with information which actors usually do not have at their disposal. Of particular relevance, in the current case, are historical knowledge of the past of unionism and the cross-national comparison. Cross-national comparison allows us to question a number of supposedly 'self-evident', 'natural' facts; it makes easier what Wright Mills called the 'sociological imagination'.

Throughout the analysis of the findings, I shall keep in consideration the working hypotheses discussed in the previous section. To use the term 'hypothesis' is perhaps not quite accurate, since qualitative – and maybe any sociological – studies can hardly achieve *demonstrations*. However, in the midst of social chaos one needs some kind of theory to organise information. This is the reason why, before shifting to the findings, the next Chapter will be devoted to the theoretical basis of the inquiry. Only theory, and not statistical inference, can make the generalisation of a very limited case-study to the understanding of national cases less than entirely arbitrary.

¹ In Italy union bureaucratisation exploded during the '70s, achieving at the end of the decade one of the highest formal bureaucratisation rates in the Western world, with an officer for every 700 members (Biagioni, Palmieri and Pipan 1980).

² Very recently, on the 13th April 1999, the national leadership of Fiom-Fim-Uilm was sensationally forced to change its proposal during a national assembly with 5,000 *delegati* in Bologna, because of the rebellion of the rank and file. The role of the rank and file seems today no less important than in the '70s.

³ This is for instance the conclusion of a life-stories analysis on Cisl activists (Carbognin and Paganelli 1981).

⁴ The chronological definition of this classical period depends on the country and is in any case historically controversial. Generally, it may be seen as coincident with the Fordist period, but this is not a necessary coincidence (it does not occur, evidently, in communist states). In Italy I shall consider in particular the period since the *miracolo economico* until the turmoil of the '70s. In Poland, the period is almost the same: from the end of Stalinism in 1953 (under totalitarianism there are not the conditions for a labour movement) until the crisis of the '80s. The periods which I define on the basis of social and political history are basically consistent with the periods of predominance of employment in the industrial sector. According to the International Labour Organisation Statistical Yearbooks, in Italy industrial employment was predominant from 1960 through 1965, and reached its absolute peak of 39,7% in 1971 (in the middle of the long *autunno caldo*). In Poland, it was predominant from 1974 through 1991, with the absolute peak of 38,9% in 1980 (Solidarity upsurge). In both countries industrialisation peaked almost at the same level and at a distance of few years, and coincided with the swan-song of the labour movement. Parallelism in the history of industrialisation is one rationale for an Italy-Poland comparison.

⁵ In the Italian case (but not only there), it has been noticed that the mass workers became the key point of reference for the union movement in a period when they constituted only a very marginal part of the working class (less than 2%). This point underlines how the interpretative and cultural resources of the unions may turn out to be as important as the structural features of work relations (Accornero 1992: 76).

⁶ The most representative work is by Dominique Méda (1995). Forrester (1996), Boissonnat (1995), Bidet and Texier (1995) and, in a different way, the advocates of a 'citizenship income' (e.g. Ferry 1995) also criticise the current meanings of work. For an earlier, authoritative French criticism of work, see the thought of André Gorz (especially, Gorz 1988).

⁷ See, among others: Godet 1994, Dejours, Duber and De Bandt (1995), Perret (1995), Clot (1995), Vassilef (1995), Calvez (1997), Schnapper (1997), Grozelier (1998), Dejours (1998), Goldfinger (1998), Freyssinet (1999).

⁸ I shall exclude from the analysis those critics who reject altogether the influence of experience and culture on collective action, since they would require a separate theoretical debate between interpretative and positivist sociology. This is a debate too large for this thesis, and one which too often, in the past, has degenerated into vain polemics.

⁹ Stressing the role of the pre-industrial path is not necessarily in opposition to Touraine's theory. In his theory of a 'natural history of social movements' (Touraine 1973), he maintains that social movements are preceded by an important pre-conflict phase, defined as a 'utopian phase'.

¹⁰ The distinction between political orientations and social consciousness is at the basis of Touraine's criticism of classic studies on workers' consciousness: '... les études dites empiriques conduisent en général à conduire à la faiblesse de la conscience de classe ouvrière. En fait, si l'on confond conscience de classe et conscience de la mission historique du prolétariat organisé syndicalement et politiquement, ou, plus simplement encore, conscience de classe et volonté politique, on peut conclure que la conscience de classe est peu répandue. Mais qu'a-t-on à faire là d'autre que de démontrer que cette classe ouvrière n'est pas révolutionnaire, ce qui est une toute autre affirmation?' (Touraine, Dubet and Wieviorka 1984: 67-68).

¹¹ Innumerable pages have been written against the concept of 'transition'. Among the earliest, see: Stark 1992; Bryant and Mokrzycki 1994; Michel 1994.

¹² In the German case, social psychological studies also confirm relevance of the East-West cleavage (Piontkowski, Öhlschlegel-Hanbrock and Hölker 1997). Other studies, specifically on trade union members, conclude that the structure of choice-making is basically the same in the East and West Germany (in other words, there is no anthropological difference between Eastern and Western workers), but their behaviour and frames of reference are different (Frege 1996). Sociologists may be dissatisfied by these studies because of their lack of explanation. One can suggest that this 'constant relevance' is the 'algebraical' result of a trend of convergence and a new trend of divergence. My study will try to explore this hypothesis.

¹³ I use for Poland after 1956 the term 'totalitarian vocation' instead of 'totalitarianism'. If we can speak of worker movements for some periods of the history of some communist countries, it is because they were not, at that time, definitely totalitarian. Speaking of social movements in a totalitarian country would be oxymoric.

¹⁴ It is also possible to reach this conclusion from more institutionalist standpoints (e.g. Hirsztowicz and Mailer 1996).

¹⁵ For surveys on this issue see: Beskid, Milic-Czerniak and Sufin (1995).

¹⁶ It will be clear that the word 'proletarian' is not used here in the Marxian sense. It refers rather to what Marxists define as pre-proletarian low classes (but not *Lumpenproletariat*), when they observe that 'at the bottom of the social hierarchy (...) the criteria of social definition are either too narrow or too global for class consciousness' (Hobsbawm 1984: 19).

¹⁷ For instance, according to property assets. On this point, David Stark has shown the Eastern European peculiarity of 'recombinant property' (Stark 1996).

¹⁸ There is indeed an alternative conception of *Homo Sovieticus*, suggested by the Polish philosopher Father Józef Tischner (1992). According to Tischner, *Homo Sovieticus* is an individual dominated by totalitarianism but nevertheless developing his own aspirations. This concept, more in continuity with the reality of the Polish workers, is basically different from the dominant one employed by some 'transitologists'. I limit the analysis to the dominant conception because it is 'dominant', and not because it is the best one.

¹⁹ The ideological character of these arguments is often evident. During a television debate on the new labour code in December 1995, the president of the Business Centre Club (one of the Polish employers' organisations) defined as a 'legacy of communist mentality' the unions' claim for a legal limit on working time (which exists in most advanced capitalist countries).

²⁰ The Italy-Poland comparison shows this point quite clearly. The two Lucchini plants in Piombino and Warsaw, were both privatised in 1992. The acceptance of privatisation was much higher in Poland.

²¹ For instance, contrarily to common expectations a 1995 survey (CBOS 1995) showed that 56% of left-wing Poles, and only 30% of their right-wing compatriots, agreed with the idea of prohibiting occupation strikes.

²² As I could notice while attending some meetings in Turin.

²³ During a study on the disabled at work (Meardi 1993), I noted the importance of equal-basis experiences and of communication for the development of attitudes of solidarity towards the disabled. These experiences could well have occurred outside work, for instance at school.

²⁴ An example is the one of the Renault factories in Belgium and France in February 1997. Here, the management *contemporaneously* announced the shut-down of the Vilvoord plant and the redundancy of 3,000 workers in French plants. The coverage of this by the press and political actors produced a 'domino effect'. It is not by chance that it gave rise to the first 'Eurostrike'.

²⁵ In Italy, Franzosi's analysis of strike action (Franzosi 1995) and La Valle's analysis of unionisation rates (La Valle 1989) have shown the subtlety that econometric models can achieve (especially when supported, as in La Valle's case, by some familiarity with the topic).

²⁶ The question was: 'What do you think of collaboration between workers and employers?' Three answers were possible: 'It is necessary because it is convenient for everybody'; 'It is possible but it must be negotiated'; 'It is impossible because workers and employers have opposite interests'. In my interviews, the attitudes were inversely correlated with these answers, because of a kind of self-censorship among the most radical activists. The excessive significance given by Accornero's team to this question may be explained, perhaps, by the fact that the inquiry was commissioned by the PCI.

²⁷ Rogers' advice is very useful; all the same I shall speak of 'unstructured' interviews rather than of 'non-directive' interviews because the passivity of the interviewer which is necessary in the latter case must be avoided in the former.

²⁸ Indeed the choice of the cases is highly biased by the process of 'bargaining' for access (data are, however, always bargained, even in quantitative studies). Very often, when researchers are sincere, we read statements like this: 'The choice of workplaces reflected three criteria: product characteristics, workplace size, and probability of obtaining access; often only the latter was a critical determinant' (Frenkel 1994: 245).

²⁹ Even an attentive sociologist like Giddens fell into contradictory statements on this topic: 'The state socialist societies (...) have genuinely succeeded in moving towards a classless order, but only at the cost of creating a system of political domination which has altered the character of social exploitation rather than necessarily diminishing it' (Giddens 1973: 294).

³⁰ A third comparative case study, although less deeply analysed, was carried out in the Danone plants. Even if the food industry is quite different from that of manufacturing, this case allows us to test the influence of the 'ownership asset' variable. Having also in Italy a foreign-capital owned company, it may be investigated whether the divergence of Polish activists as compared with Italians at Fiat and Lucchini is due to the 'foreign' character of the employer. It must be remembered that, according to World Bank data (cited in Jarosz 1996: 10), in Eastern European private companies research has been possible in only 3-5% of cases (which seems less than under communist rule).

CHAPTER 2

AN INTERPRETATIVE POINT OF VIEW ON POST-COMMUNIST WORK RELATIONS

The new employer made some visible investments – they did up the locker-rooms, they did up the toilets... The new toilets are impressive, elegant, just like in a hotel; I had never seen toilets like that before... previously, they were awful... but back then we had the time to go there, so I don't know which is better, whether now or then.

(A Fiat worker in Bielsko-Biala)

1. Understanding Eastern European industrial relations

Before shifting to the findings, this chapter will clarify the theoretical assumptions underlying the research perspective. In particular, it will strive to outline an interpretative approach to the study of Eastern European social actors. Today this part of the world shows how necessary is a sociological contribution to the understanding of political, economic, and legal issues. An approach developed with a view to studying a delicate field such as the post-communist world might then be tested on countries more familiar to Western sociology.

The process of transformation in the post-socialist societies has proved to be much more complex than expected. In the field of industrial relations there is a broad consensus on this point. The research problem is, then, not that of confirming this fact (the complexity and the length of the 'transition' process), but of understanding it in more depth. The aim of this 'speculative' chapter is to delineate the framework of a complementary approach to the topic.

No theoretical revolution is attempted. Work relations are very refractory to all-inclusive theories, and not only in Eastern Europe. They are by their nature controversial and heterogeneous. This means that any approach must be open to complexity. This can be done in an unashamedly empirical way. We need more

information about work relations, and any source for this might turn out to be useful. My particular focus has, however, turned into a micro-sociological approach, which if further developed might improve our understanding of even very 'macro' phenomena.

For reasons of clarity, in this chapter I shall concentrate on only one of the two comparative terms – the Polish one. Eastern European research is here taken to be paradigmatic, but similar issues could be raised with respect to Western Europe. My choice is due to the fact that – as it will be shown – social processes are sharper, and therefore more visible, in the East. They therefore raise wider theoretical issues in a more direct way and prompt a re-examination of sociological categories.

The structure of the chapter is as follows. First, in a brief review of the literature we will point out a number of issues that are still open and require theoretical work and empirical research. Secondly, an attempt will be made to integrate some different theoretical approaches in a new perspective on the problems of work relations and trade unionism. Thirdly, I shall indicate how the theoretical categories are operationalised in the research project. Finally, some consideration will be given to the historical assumptions underlying the research questions.

Whether consciously or not, we all look at social reality through 'paradigms', that is frameworks which help make sense of our perceptions. The 'paradigms' currently employed in the case of Eastern Europe, and especially of industrial relations, are mainly inherited from the cold-war past and therefore – I shall try to show – are often unsuitable for the end-of-century situation. Although the literature is already large, two general paradigms in the analysis of Eastern European industrial relations can be distinguished as particularly popular: the 'future-centred', or 'teleological', paradigm, and the 'past-centred', or 'path-dependent' one. They do not constitute coherent theoretical approaches, and each has been used in a number of different theories. At a high level of abstraction, they are just general paradigms followed, not always consciously, by the analysts. Both of them have contributed to knowledge and the understanding of the topic, yet both also encounter important obstacles. My aim is not to substitute them with a new kind of truth. It is rather to show how interpretative research, comparative thinking, and finally a good measure of

theoretical eclecticism can contribute to the overcoming of some of the problems encountered by these paradigms.

1.1. Future-centred paradigms: transition and engineering

The most common example of the teleological way of looking at the post-communist world is represented by the image of 'transition'.

The idea of 'transition' was most popular in the early stages of reform, when Jeffrey Sachs created the images of 'in-only-one-jump' and of shock-therapy (Sachs 1994). By now it has become common sense to state, as the Economist did (22nd November 1997: p.3), that 'the switch from decadent communism to primitive capitalism was *just the first step*' and 'a huge part of the transition is yet to come' (my italics). One jump was not enough, but what has still to be done is unclear. The authors of the most accurate and rigorous hypothesis of a *marktvermittelte Konvergenz* – developed on rational-choice ground – (Schienstock and Traxler 1993) had to acknowledge after only few years that a divergence was in fact more probable (Thompson and Traxler 1997).

However, the transition paradigm keeps on operating, consciously or unconsciously, in most analyses.¹ Eastern European reality is constantly in conflict with the end point of transition – an ideal-type of capitalism, supposed to have an unexplained power of attraction. Any discrepancy from that ideal-type is seen as 'abnormality', as something which has to be corrected in order finally to achieve normality.²

After the first period, analyses have become more cautious and it has become commonplace to criticise the term 'transition'. However, the paradigm has not been changed: it is simply the case that the 'jump' image has been replaced with a 'catch-up' one. According to the transition paradigm (both the 'extremist' and 'revisionist' versions), the process of social change consists mainly of imitation, the safest way of operating 'the big bound'. As Vaclav Klaus put it very clear, Eastern Europe wanted a capitalist economy just like the West, without wasting time on experiments.

Almost a decade after the beginning of the transformation, the unavoidable result of this way of thinking is deep frustration. It cannot be coincidental that this frustration is greatest in the country most committed to the transition ideal, the Czech

Republic.³ If an ideal-type is taken as 'normality', then reality can do nothing but remain very far from it, and it ends up looking 'pathological'. This can be best seen in analyses of industrial conflict. Rather than a cost that could be reduced but never eliminated, conflict is usually considered a 'social problem' stemming from former 'bad habits' or other usually unexplained diseases (e.g. Gąciarz and Pańków 1996a; 1996b; Konecki and Kulpińska 1995).⁴ The same can be said, however, about a number of topics. The slow pace of privatisation is condemned as a perverse resistance of communist élites or of communist-educated workers, but even Mrs Thatcher needed more time to privatise less than the post-communist states are privatising.

One could say more. Eastern Europe might quickly turn out to be more 'advanced' than the West in the way the countries defeated in World War II (Germany, Japan, Italy) grew much quicker than the winners after 1945: they are not 'held up' by the established distributional coalitions which reduce economic dynamism with their slowness, bureaucracy, over-regulation and barriers to entry (Olson 1982). In many fields, ranging from computer usage to political communication, the post-communist societies have already promptly 'picked up' the latest versions offered by the West. That way, they 'skipped' some developmental stages and 'surpassed' some Western realities characterised by stronger inertia.

In a global world, normality is represented – both statistically and logically, if one considers the current trends – not by the West, but by the disordered Second and Third World. Lepenies (1996) notices how after 1989 the global process of change is deeper in Eastern than in Western Germany, so that the former is definitely more modern than the latter. He refers notably to the processes of industrial restructuring and related unemployment. Moreover, even in the most extreme case of Albania, the financial disaster of early 1997 could be seen, rather than as a local pathology, as a distilled form of a globally emerging 'casino-capitalism', following Carl Schmitt's idea that it is precisely the exceptional case which has a decisive, explanatory relevance.⁵ The Albanians have even been defined as 'postmodern', suddenly identifying themselves with the international community (Negri 1997). Taking literally the values of this community, 'in a global market [they] consider it obvious

that they have the right to offer themselves as a commodity; consequently, [they] use any means available to exercise this right to engage in a nomadic search for jobs that capitalist propaganda promise on the global scene' (14).

After all, Habermas (1990) had already tried to reverse the transition paradigm, stating that it is the West which is 'catching up' with the East as far as democratic ideas and communicative civil society are concerned. Although this statement is probably factually mistaken, it opened at least an alternative conceptual perspective on the East-West link.

The transition paradigm, in its enviable simplicity, is so idealistic that stating a need for empirical assessment is very easy. But there are other approaches centred on the future which are more sophisticated.

I shall consider as an example political 'engineering', which often, although its ideology is often in radical contrast with the 'transition' theory, concurs with it in its teleological posture: the goal is clear and reality is evaluated by comparing it to that goal. Concerned above all with the implementation of a given political recipe, political engineering usually attributes specific roles to the social actors. While the neo-liberal 'transition' theorists are frustrated by the resistance of the 'social material' to the market, the 'actor-centric' political engineers are usually puzzled by their incapacity to transform this resistance into political action.

The best example is perhaps neo-corporatism.⁶ Although certainly estimable for its focus on real institutions, it introduces high expectations as to the role of social actors. Especially after the socio-economic crisis of 1990-93, in Eastern Europe the concern with social regulation and with the role of the state has rapidly increased. In Eastern Europe neo-corporatists suggest on the one hand tripartite forms of interest regulation, on the other an active role for the state in constructing the social actors whose participation is required by the same corporatist model (e.g. Burda 1993). In so doing, they face the dilemma of what comes first, corporatism or appropriately organised social actors. This general theoretical problem with corporatism becomes more complex in the post-communist state. Here evidently neither the state nor social actors are spontaneously committed to corporatism, although they sometimes pursue 'corporatist' practices of one kind or another (Staniszki 1991; Tatur 1995). On many

accounts, this dilemma is as insoluble as the problem of the chicken and the egg.⁷ The lesson appears to be that, both for employers' associations (e.g. Frieske 1997; Kozek 1999) and trade unions (e.g. Reutter 1996; Frieske 1998), we need to pay attention to what actually happens in the everyday experience in order to foresee what can follow at the central level.

On the other hand, the discrepancy between Eastern European reality and neo-corporatist models is not abnormal. In Western Europe too corporatist practices in the '90s are significantly different from the 'classic' ones of the '70s. Very often what we observe is a kind of weak corporatism between weak social actors, developing precisely in the countries lacking the classic preconditions for the neo-corporatist model, as the Italian case reveals (Regini 1997). We shall see in more detail in chapter 3 how both the Polish and Italian corporatisms, far from corresponding to the wishes of political actors, seem to be a mix of macro-facades and heterogeneous micro-corporatisms.

1.2. *Past-centred paradigms: path-dependency and culturalism*

The emergence of multiple obstacles to transition theories drove many industrial relations scholars to concentrate on the legacy of the past, sometimes explicitly (e.g. Blanchflower and Freeman 1994; 1997). Of this types of theory I shall consider path-dependency theory and culturalist analyses. The path-dependency approach (Stark 1992; Hausner, Jessop and Nielsen 1995) suggests that the institutional *legacy of the past*, concretised in consolidated routines, affects social reality and precludes a simple and painless 'transition'. Theorists following this paradigm pay more attention to the 'human material' of the institutions than the 'transitologists' usually do. Yet they inevitably fall into making the opposite mistake. Instead of overestimating change, and being frustrated by inertia, they stress the legacies of the past. In so doing, they fail to explain the changes which, nevertheless, occur in both institutions and behaviour. This is not to say that they disregard change, since, on the contrary, they are concerned with precisely this theoretical problem. However, they lack an understanding of innovative change of rupture. We shall see in the interviews that an awareness of a rupture between a 'before' and an 'afterwards' is common among Polish union activists.

In a period defined by many sociologists as one of 'deinstitutionalization' (Touraine 1997: 55ff.) and especially in societies differentiating so quickly as Eastern Europe, such a stress on institutionalised patterns of behaviour seems misplaced. For instance, the standpoint of Solidarity in Poland changed considerably more than once between 1988 and 1993, and change started always from below. The same path-dependence theorists, in fact, reach one of their most interesting conclusions while speaking of the complexity, and not of the predictability, of Eastern European institutions (Stark 1996).

Other analysts are concerned not by the institutional path, but by that of culture. In its purest version, this culturalist approach has developed the concept of 'Homo Sovieticus' (Levada 1993; Zaslavskij 1995). Accordingly, post-communist workers would look at the new reality through the lens of the old system, expecting from capitalism what socialism promised but failed to deliver (Tischner 1992). Adamski (1998: 47) concludes that since they 'are the only influential social class which has not yet come to terms with the status which the newly-emerging economic system has to offer', blue-collar workers 'can be expected to stimulate enough social and political problems for at least several more governing coalitions'.

In spite of proving to be useful in particular cases, the culturalist views encounter problems of determinism symmetrical to those of the 'transitologists'. It is not explained whether current orientations are inherited from the past or are rather a peculiar reaction to the present. Workers' attitudes are not locked in a past culture, as suggested by some external interpretations (e.g. Kramer 1995): this point is demonstrated by the rapid change in attitudes towards work and unemployment after 1989 (Kozek 1994).

In most cases, cultural variables are not considered as an object of study, but rather as a convenient 'emergency' variable intended to account for the 'unexplained residua'. In short, what does not fit the evolutionary paradigm is explained by reference to an obscure and innate cultural diversity manifested by Eastern Europeans. This attitude is very common among Western human resource managers:

Des dimensions culturelles mal identifiées par les responsables – "ils mettent en avant une pensée circulaire propre aux Polonais dans l'analyse des problèmes" - semblent interférer avec l'efficacité supposée des méthodes rationnelles enseignées. Ainsi les ingénieurs, par ailleurs

créatifs et compétents, présenteraient une difficulté à penser logiquement. (Durand, Le Goff and Tobera 1997: 118)

A very elaborate kind of cultural explanation of differences in collective action is Putnam's theory of 'social capital', developed in the light of the differences between Northern and Southern Italy (Putnam 1993) but also popular among Polish sociologists. According to Putnam's theory, workplace solidarity and unionisation depend mainly on the civic traditions of the social environment outside the factory. Putnam's strongly integrative conception of democratic action fits with difficulties with the clearly conflict-based union action. However, the most important limit of his theory is that it falls into social determinism, searching for the causes of current political behaviour in local traditions going back as far as the XII century. This approach runs the risk of backing dominant beliefs (although this charge cannot be levelled at Putnam), and for this reason had already been violently rejected in the case of Black Americans, who, according to commentators drawing on Putnam's arguments, would be unable to mobilise (Banfield 1970). Recently, Putnam's approach has also been challenged by developments in Italy: contrary to Putnam's forecasts, in recent years the most innovative local government initiatives and new social movements (starting with that against the Mafia) have developed in the supposedly less 'civic' regions of the South. At the same time, the political scene of the supposedly more 'civic' North was dominated by parties like the *Lega Nord* or *Forza Italia* which hardly correspond to Putnam's (or any other) definition of 'civic commitment'. We should therefore be at least cautious before applying this approach to Central and Eastern Europe.

The theoretical contradictions between the (generally) economic approach of transition and the culturalist one are striking. The fact that they are often associated reveals the theoretical laziness of many accounts.⁸ As a result, workers' attitudes which are in fact shared with the 'developed' capitalist world, are considered specific to Eastern European. When, in December 1998, Polish miners went on strike to defend early retirements, they were criticised for defending Gierek-era privileges, while they actually work longer hours underground than their Western colleagues. Why, then, should we consider a legacy what is actually an aspiration to Western standards? An illustration of this syndrome is provided by Ploszajki, who remarks on

the following peculiarity of Polish workers, a 'peculiarity' actually not unfamiliar to most workers of the world (even if with important cross-national variance in its diffusion):

Some respondents oppose the privatization of their own firm ('because it is special') while at the same time accepting ('naturally') the general principle of privatization ('because it is necessary'). (Ploszajki 1995: 205)

The short discussion I have presented on these approaches does not imply that the paradigms are useless. The future-centred ones give reference points for the analysis of the present: in order to understand disorder, we need after all some representation of order. In the same way, past-centred paradigms furnish very often indispensable *ad hoc* explanations, and remind us that any social actor has an history and a cultural background which cannot be easily dismantled. However, they still fail to provide an explanation of why Eastern European social actors have recently so deeply changed, while remaining very far from the normative models which have been proposed.

1.3. Refusing paradigms? Rational-choice approaches

If the intellectual paradigms are all thought to be unsuitable, one could attempt to avoid any meta-historical or macro-sociological concern and study just the given situations through an 'agnostic' approach which disregards historical context and political ideals. The best examples of such a way of proceeding are rational choice approaches. While they have strongly influenced the interpretations of post-communist industrial relations, they do not really constitute a 'paradigm' in themselves. Rational action theory is a general mode of looking at social reality, and is not linked to a particular image of post-communist change. By contrast, as a methodological approach, it has been described as 'agnostic'. It is not directly connected to any theoretical 'macro' paradigm, although it has a link with methodological individualism and thereby with the suppositions of neo-classical economics. However, I shall avoid a discussion of its fundament. Rational action theory may also be useful in Eastern Europe in formulating and testing different hypotheses. What is important here is to recall that in the case of transforming societies the general problems of the time-horizon and of information become particularly significant. As has been noted elsewhere, rational-choice approaches (e.g.

game theory) 'impute an extraordinary amount of knowledge to emerging political actors who operate in environments characterized by extreme uncertainty and high strategic interdependence' (Kitschelt 1992: 9)

This situation gives a particular slant to the general criticism of rational-choice assumptions:

Utility maximization has little empirical content without strong auxiliary assumptions on the utility functions and other model ingredients. Because a trained economist can see through a utility maximization, stating auxiliary assumptions is often little different from stating empirical predictions outright, as, say, a sociologist might. In this sense, the utility maximization merely packages the prediction. (Coulisk 1996: 685)

Such criticism can actually be contested on theoretical grounds. Yet it has a particular force when, like in Eastern Europe, the 'assumptions' are not a separate problem, but *the* research problem. Our research problem is understanding the differences in trade union consciousness: this is simultaneously a theoretical and empirical question. As we shall see, not only are the conclusions reached by the trade unions different, but so are their points of reference. The different outcomes are not produced simply by the different contexts; they are also produced by the different way the actors look at the context, that is by the different *rationality* they use. The unbounded rational worker is perhaps a useful concept; the only problem is that he does not exist.

In transforming societies we do not know the preferences of the actors; however, even macro-sociological issues largely depend upon these. As Claus Offe (1994), for instance, states about social policy, before planning solutions we have to see whether we are dealing with *Homo Sovieticus*, *Homo Oeconomicus*, or *Homo Hungaricus*. The assumptions we make about preferences (are they the same as in the West? Are they different? Are they changing?) directly affect the answer to the research question about the nature of transition. Stating as an assumption the answer to the research question would hardly be a scientific way of approaching the problem.

2. Seeking interpretative categories

An attempt to construct a more careful characterisation of post-communist transformation, which could also be applied to the present, has been made by the Polish sociologist Jadwiga Staniszkis, who also carried out research on Russia and

China. Having stated that the 'ontology of communism' is not sufficient to understand the end of communism, she proposes an 'evolutionary paradigm of shock change' (Staniszkis 1994). This would focus on the rhythm of old-order deinstitutionalisation and new-order institutionalisation, as well as on their 'double-sided' functions: stabilisation and the facilitation of change.

In spite of this focus on the dynamics of the present, Staniszkis' model eventually adopts as its decisive variable an historical one: the relationship between communism and pre-communist reality. This variable is indeed appropriate for 'macro' comparisons of post-communist countries. Staniszkis shows the differences between those communist countries which destroyed traditional institutions (Russia, Albania, Yugoslavia, North Korea), those which maintained existing collective identifications (Central-Eastern Europe), and the one country where there has been a reciprocal contamination of communism and traditions (China). These three groups have respectively followed three different ways of exiting communism: violence with nationalism; rationalisation; use of tradition to absorb tensions and reinforce the rules.

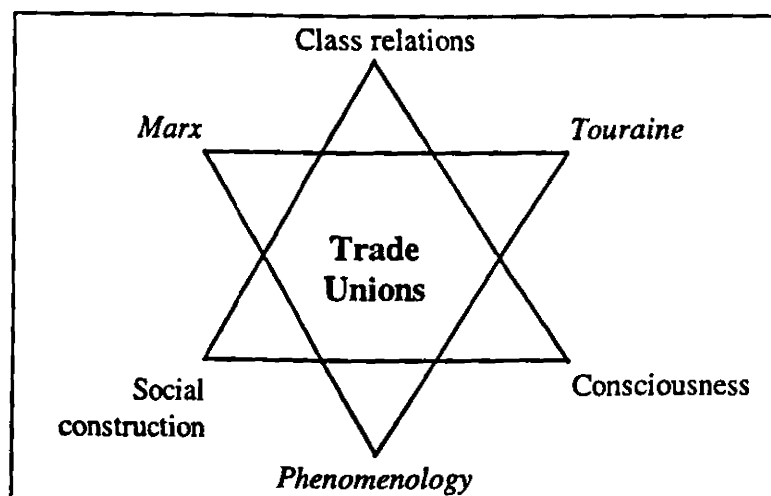
If one is concerned not with post-communist comparisons, but with a comparison between the West and one of the Staniszkis's subgroups (Central-Eastern Europe), this model ceases to be useful. It becomes only one variation, although a sophisticated one, of the past-centred paradigms.

Overcoming the illusions of paradigms does not require only an empirical assessment. If we do not want to fall into an absolute empiricism, we need to develop theories and concepts with which to define reality. We can then shift from empirical reportage to the definition of sociological research questions. In Eastern Europe, we must first check the actual meaning of the concepts we use.

I shall use three main comprehensive concepts in my analysis of workers' collective action: class, consciousness, and the social construction of reality. They will be used to describe the meaning of Polish and Italian union traditions, and to explain the ways in which they change. The main theoretical sources I shall exploit are also three: Marxist and materialist sociology of work, Touraine's sociology of action, and different branches of phenomenological sociology.

This theoretical eclecticism may seem surprising, but it is in fact neither strange nor new. First, these are categories that are so popular that sociologists can rarely avoid – the problem is that their actual meaning is not always explained. Secondly, there are already sociological works explicitly using, in turn, two of the three references used here. One could mention François Dubet (esp. 1994), who uses both Touraine and the phenomenological tradition; a number of ethnomethodologists such as Willis (1977) who combine a phenomenological orientation with Marxist views; and finally the earlier Touraine himself insofar as he was deeply influenced by Marxism (and often even defined as a neo-Marxist). Yet the Reader will quickly see that here there is not a 'division of labour' among theorists: all the concepts I use are simultaneously influenced by different theoretical sources. Graphically, we can illustrate the interrelationship of theoretical approaches and concepts in a sort of Star of David, as shown in Figure 1. (Father Jankowski, Solidarity confessor, would perhaps see it as evidence of a Jewish conspiracy behind the trade unions; the Reader will understand that this is not the meaning of the illustration, and that the Jewish origin of Marx, of the founders of phenomenology Husserl and Schutz, and of one of the closest of Touraine's collaborators, is here absolutely irrelevant.)

Figure 1 - Theoretical framework



2.1. Class

The concept of class is used here mainly in Touraine's sense, which is in turn connected to Marxist and materialist sociology of work. This conception could not be further from the idea of a social stratum, in which the word 'class' is often used, especially in American sociology but increasingly also in French (Lebel, Oberti and Reillier 1996). It is closer to the meaning adopted by British sociologists, at least when they focus on work and define class as a complement of 'market situation' and 'work situation' (Lockwood 1958).

It may seem strange to make use of Marx in an analysis of trade unionism. Marx (and Marxists') view of trade unions has been since the very beginning ambivalent, as the very title of one of the last orthodox Marxist works shows: *Der Doppelcharakter der Gewerkschaften* (Zoll 1978). Since the balance in the *Doppelcharakter* of the unions remains unexplained, one might better speak of the *Doppelcharakter des Marxismus*. Incapable of solving the dilemma of trade unions' ambiguity, Marxists – a notable example being Lenin – often became antipathetic. Historical determinism could not accept that the unions 'defend and represent the workers as they are, and not as they should be' (Cella 1999: 8). In fact, I will not refer specifically to Marx's opinions about trade unions. I will rather – in the spirit of my proposed theoretical eclecticism – make use of some Marxist sociology of work and class analysis, without reference to Marx's political and historical theory.

Marxist and materialist sociology of work have the primary, relevant merit of concentrating on how conflict structures the work situation (Hyman 1975; 1989; Edwards and Scullion 1982; Edwards 1986; 1992). In opposition to most Eastern European studies, I consider the work situation to be the *primary* situation in which class relationships are constructed. Following Marx, we can understand conflict at work by considering the distinction between labour and labour power. The realisation of labour power considered initially as 'potential' occurs in the factory, outside the limits of the market. It occurs, therefore, through an unavoidable conflict between organisers and workers which has been called 'effort bargaining'. This process is fundamental in any society based on accumulation and on industrial production – that is, in Soviet societies as much as under capitalism. While appreciating this part of

Marx's thought, I do not share his opinion that *ownership* relations are the most important aspect of production relations: the reality of state-socialism showed the independence of the latter from the former.

From this perspective, the everyday experience of conflict at work is more important for the construction of class than income distribution. In Mann's words (1973: 22), in Marx's analysis 'the [class] break is (...) not financial but rather one of job control'. Although income and profit distribution are fundamental in defining the life chances of different groups, they do not explain why industrial society – more than any other historical phase – has been experienced as a field of struggle between workers and employers, not simply between rich and poor. Moreover, neither does it explain why the aristocracy of labour has usually been on the trade unions' side, while the lower middle class (for instance administrative employees with control tasks) has been on the other. Marxist sociology has no other explanation for the loyalty of employees with control tasks than that of 'contradictory class locations' (Wright 1976). Their position ceases being contradictory as soon as work conflict is put at the centre of the analysis.

In Przeworski's words, 'class is a name for a relation, not for a collection of individuals' (1985: 81). If it is a matter of social *relations*, and not of social *locations*, class cannot be defined by a continuous variable like income. The problem is not so much of counting how many people belong to the working class, but rather of recalling that the working class has been the only class to pose a sustained challenge to rule by social elites. The central role of conflict implies that in a society there can be neither more nor less than two classes. This does not mean, however, that all of society must take part in this conflict, hence a dual class division does not exhaust the social configuration (Marx himself was absolutely aware of this, as he showed in his historical works).

This is not to say that economic issues are unimportant. One should avoid the ideological criticism of economic demands which has been frequent in the Marxist tradition, and strongest in the work of Lenin. The problem here is to see the legitimating structure of demands, the *économies de la justification* to use Boltanski's terms (Boltanski and Thevenot 1991). Are economic demands motivated on the basis

of relative income differences among social groups, on the basis of workers' needs, or on the basis of surplus re-appropriation? From a materialist standpoint, only the last of these relates to class relationships. In this context it is possible to say that class, rather than a category, is a 'meaning' of action (and here, as we shall soon see, lies the importance of consciousness).

The attention paid by Marxist analysts to production relations suggests an important connection with Touraine's sociology. In fact, Touraine's *La conscience ouvrière* might be considered as an attempt to support this point. The issue of the 'slow-down', the most important class-relationship indicator in both Touraine's and Marxist conceptions, is the area in which the 'overlap' between the two approaches is most striking. Moreover, if slow-down is the link between Marxist sociology of work and the early Touraine, another important topic of materialist analyses, deskilling, seems to me to be a potential link between Marxism and Touraine's recent sociology of work (Touraine 1996).

This stress on the work situation has been particularly fruitful in the field of international comparisons. In this area it has been shown that job control is uniformly important for workers in Western societies (Mann 1973: 25-26). Similarities in 'conflict consciousness' were found between British and French trade unions, otherwise considered as opposed models of unionism.⁹ Finally, even the American 'exceptionalism' had to be revisited when the shopfloor demands of trade unions were considered (Jacoby 1991): in the post-war 'golden age' it was the control of production on the shopfloor which was at stake in labour-management relations in the workplace (Fairris 1997). I shall show that this is where we can see a sort of 'unity' between Solidarity workers' action and Western workers' action.

The class nature of control issues implies that they already have a political aspect. However, it is not sufficient to identify just any conflict at work in order to speak of classes.¹⁰ If we speak of class and not of group, this is because class conflict has a general social dimension. The general character of class conflict is best revealed by the role of intellectuals in it, but this does not imply that there must be an explicit political conflict on class issues. The overestimation of political ideologies and cleavages is one of the greatest obstacles to the understanding of class relationships.

What is important is that the control of industrial production and accumulation must be a central concern in society. This is the reason why, as I shall try to show through my findings, the concept of the working class becomes vacuous when industrial production and development lose their place in society, even though work conflict may remain an important *local* issue. To summarise, I will define social class in industrial society as *social actor involved in a general, social conflict over industrial production and development*.

This issue is assessed by Touraine as follows.

In the industrial society classes are the actors that manifest social relations of production, that is a mode of management and social appropriation of the machine and of the rationalised instruments of production. In the industrial society class is not a social level, nor an economic condition; it is constructed through a social relationship and this is not analogous to a market relation between seller and buyer of labour power. It lies, as Lukács after Marx defined it, in the social realisation of reason, the contradiction that enters into the natural logic of reason. (Touraine 1996: 98)

Touraine's conception of class was developed via the analysis of workers' consciousness (1966), and later tested in works of general sociology (1973) and on the workers' movement (Touraine, Dubet, and Wieviorka 1984). The peculiarity of Touraine's thought is the avoidance of the classic dilemma of the distinction between *Klasse an sich* and *Klasse für sich*. His point is almost provocative: 'disons avec force qu'il n'existe pas de "classe en soi", qu'il ne peut pas y avoir de classe sans conscience de classe' (Touraine, Dubet and Wieviorka 1984: 52). However, this view is not exclusive to Touraine. Mann, notably, writes – albeit from a different perspective – that 'if subjective consciousness is lacking, so too are the objective conditions [of class]' (Mann 1973: 52). This argument brings us to the second sociological concept, that of consciousness.

2.2. Consciousness

As Giddens notes, 'one of the weakest, or least clarified, aspects of Marx's writings concerns the relationship between class and class consciousness' (1973: 92). In his early writings, and notably in the criticism of philosophical materialism, Marx was aware of the role of consciousness. If consciousness were not something more than a passive reflection of material circumstances there would be no place for the active role of human beings as creators of social reality. Yet this point has never been

adequately developed. In Marx's writings (and later in those by Kautsky or Poulantzas), the shift from *Klasse an sich* to *Klasse für sich* seems relatively unproblematic: through the experience of fighting together, reinforced by some factors such as plant size, the workers should become aware of the general class conflict taking place (Marx 1847). One and a half centuries after Marx's Manifesto, the question of why workers rarely behave as a class is open again. Therefore, we must seek other theoretical standpoints in order to understand trade unions' actual behaviour.

First the concept of consciousness must be defined. Touraine (1966) concentrates on this issue, aiming at transcending the dualism between consciousness and structure, and that between consciousness and action (Davis 1979). Under particular circumstances, workers' consciousness becomes 'class' consciousness. Touraine aims to:

...remplacer une conception doctrinaire de la conscience de classe par une conception historique et sociologique, fondée sur des observations concrètes et conduisant à rejeter l'idée que la conscience de classe est la forme pleinement développée de toute conscience ouvrière, la vérité permanente de celle-ci. Elle n'en est, au contraire, qu'une forme particulière, d'une importance extrême, non pas seulement pour les modèles d'action qui se sont développés à partir d'elle, mais parce que son moment d'élection est le moment central de l'évolution industrielle.(...) La formation de la conscience de classe suppose que le conflit privé du maître et de l'ouvrier, du travail et de l'argent, devienne un conflit social, de sorte que chacun des acteurs puisse en appeler à la totalité de la société et à l'intérêt général, au lieu de défendre seulement ses droits particuliers. (...) mais cette conscience d'une totalité ne se développe que lorsque le travail industriel devient à tous les niveaux un système d'organisation. (Touraine 1966: 119)

This orientation moves away from a materialist standpoint. By introducing the concept of workers' consciousness,

...on s'oppose nettement à toute forme de définition 'objective', non sociale, d'une situation historique. Elle indique un refus absolu de mettre en relation des situations définies sans référence à leur signification pour les acteurs historiques et des conduites considérées comme des réponses à des 'circonstances'. (122)

This is the reason why the criticisms of Touraine's 'technological determinism' (e.g. Hyman 1996b) are not completely convincing. Workers' consciousness is

...le principe d'unité entre les aspects 'objectifs' et 'subjectifs' d'une situation historique, entre les conditions et le sens de l'action. On ne peut pas parler de conscience ouvrière que si on se réfère à certaines exigences théoriques de l'homme au travail. (123)

The idea of class as an 'historical actor' or 'acting subject' and the focus on consciousness were present before Touraine in the thought of Lukács (1923/1971). His conception, albeit in a Marxist general framework, was much more idealistic, directly influenced by Hegel. Class consciousness was defined as a conscious sense of the historical role of the class. Lukács himself, however, was aware of the risks of moving away from a materialist standpoint. As a result, from time to time he reaffirms the link with the material nature of consciousness, with a stress (which seems to me somehow forced) on adjectives such as 'practical' or 'concrete'.

When the worker knows himself as a commodity his knowledge is practical. This is to say, this knowledge brings about an objective cultural change in the object of knowledge. (169)

[Reification] can be overcome only by constant and constantly renewed efforts to disrupt the reified structure of existence by concretely relating to the concretely manifested contradictions of the total development, by becoming conscious of the immanent meanings of these contradictions for the total development. (197)

These statements are reminiscent of the early writings of Marx (not all of which were known at the time Lukács wrote), in which, as Giddens comments (1973: 113), 'consciousness is not the "effect" of human activity in the material world, but constitutes the attribution of meaning which guides conduct, and is inseparable from that conduct'.

The concept of class consciousness seems more useful than other, simpler concepts such as identity or awareness. As defined by Touraine (1966; 1973), consciousness implies the three principles of identity, opposition, and totality (the so-called IOT scheme). In this work, I shall use these three principles in a slightly more moderate way, as shown in the first chapter. Their usefulness lies in the strict connection to the idea of (class) conflict, of a societal stake, and of action. The ideas of identity and awareness, on the other hand, are 'static', and non-dialectical, and they cause a confusion between class and community. Workers' identity is strongest in closed workers' communities, but in these situations class consciousness and action are often weaker, as was clearly shown by Hoggart (1957) and as I shall show in the Piombino case.

Like the concept of class, the concept of consciousness will also be used here in relation to the experience of work: it is rooted in the 'us' and 'them' opposition in the workplace (Lane 1974). The IOT (Identity-Opposition-Totality) scheme of

consciousness developed by Touraine is sometimes recalled as IOTA (by adding Alternative). In fact, the more ideological 'A' was added by other theorists, like Giddens and Mann, under the influence of Mannheim's thought, while for Touraine the idea of an 'alternative' society is not as important for class consciousness as the meaning given to the work situation.¹¹ By contrast, Touraine makes a distinction between dominant and subordinate levels of normative reference similar to Parkin's (1971):

Plus les questions visent à définir une image de la société, plus elles orientent les réponses vers des problèmes d'adaptation ou de satisfaction, d'isolement social ou de retrait. Plus, au contraire, les questions visent à établir un rapport concret entre l'individu et l'organisation sociale, c'est-à-dire plus elles évoquent des comportements collectifs réels, verbaux ou actifs, plus elles permettent de saisir les orientations de la conscience ouvrière. (Touraine 1966: 151)

It should be clear from these points that adding the idea of consciousness to the idea of class is not falling into idealism, nor into ideology. It is therefore – even if it represents a substantial theoretical shift – not incompatible with the materialist view of the labour process presented in the previous section. The link between the two concepts remains, however, problematic. Making the relationship between class and consciousness more convincing (a task which was undertaken by Lukács although not in an entirely successful way) will require another theoretical contribution, the third corner of the triangle: the phenomenological idea of the social construction of reality.

2.3. The social construction of reality

In order to avoid historicist or idealistic conceptions, we can best define consciousness as the 'sedimentation of experiences and meanings' (Berger and Luckmann 1967: 85). The role of everyday experience in constructing, *making*, social class and social consciousness is underlined in a number of historical and sociological works (e.g. Thompson 1966 or Hoggart 1957). I shall limit myself to only a few examples:

Under capitalism class is an immediate and in some sense a directly experienced historical reality, whereas in pre-capitalist epochs it may merely be an analytical construct. (Hobsbawm 1984: 18)

Day-to-day experiences at the workplace are likely to be more decisive in shaping a man's views of collective bargaining and strike activity than are the abstract moral precepts of the dominant value system. (Parkin 1971/1973: 94)

For the most part men visualize the class structure of their society from the vantage points of their own particular milieux, and their perceptions of the larger society will vary according to their experiences of social inequality in the smaller societies in which they live out their daily lives. (Lockwood 1966: 249)

It was by answering Althusser on the issue of the working class that Thompson (1978) suggested the category of 'human experience'. Its aim was to define the imprecise set of situations and emotions constructed by a social class and opposed to their destiny. Much earlier, however, 'experience' had been introduced as one of the fundamental categories of sociology by Simmel (1908). Although it may appear as a purely individual phenomenon, experience is necessarily social (Dubet 1994). From a social-psychological perspective – on the basis of self-perception theory – the role of everyday experience in building the commitment of union members remains central.

A sense of shared beliefs about the social and economic aspects of work may be derived from the common experiences of working people, and (...) it is these shared beliefs which serve as the basis for ideological attachment to the union. (Gordon 1996: 248)

Giving some consideration to everyday experience helps the understanding of the *boundaries*, the *timing* and the *forms* of the social construction of class and consciousness. Moreover, it places the worker as a social actor back at the centre of industrial sociology, after a period when the shift in focus from work and workers to economic concerns had transformed the same worker into a passive object *acted on* by macro-level forces (Simpson 1989). More generally, it allows us to avoid considering the actors – in Garfinkel's words – as 'cultural idiots'. This has substantial consequences. Zoll's recent inquiry on workers' solidarity, for instance, springs from an examination of the experiences in which this is constructed. The decisive factor for creating solidarity – he claims – rather than a definition of interests, is the development of a tie of affection in the everyday practice of work. Therefore workers' solidarity seldom extended beyond the factory gate even when there was an interest in extending it.

Bien que l'idée de la solidarité ouvrière ait toujours concerné la totalité de la classe ouvrière, dans la réalité s'imposait toujours cette logique relative au groupe, à savoir la limitation de la solidarité à une partie de la classe ouvrière. (...) Cela conduit à une réflexion sur les bases de la solidarité: en premier lieu il y avait la prise de conscience rationnelle de la nécessité de limiter au minimum la concurrence mutuelle pour pouvoir s'imposer dans le conflit avec le capital (...). Mais il a toujours existé aussi un lien affectif dépassant la prise de conscience rationnelle et conférant un caractère durable à la solidarité. (Zoll 1992: 141-142)

The concept of social construction and the centrality of experience allows the link between work conflict and class consciousness to be defined. Since work conflict is the fundamental experience of workers, class is the highest general meaning given by the workers to this conflict in the effort to raise the level of the struggle. That the relationship goes in the opposite direction seems unlikely. If this were the case, it would be the awareness of an extensive, homogenous community of destiny which prompted struggle in the workplace. The move is from work to class, and not the opposite. Therefore, more important than stratification analysis is the study of social meanings and experiences: the working class declines not because of social differentiation at the macro-level (this can also exist in periods of strong workers' movements), but when work is no longer the arena of clear social conflict.

This argument is consistent with the phenomenological reflection on 'the boundaries of experiences and the experience of boundaries' (Luckmann and Schutz 1989, Vol.II: 102-106). Understanding the construction of reality through everyday experience has been the purpose of phenomenological sociology since Husserl formulated the idea of the *Lebenswelt*. This theoretical current paid particular attention to the problem of consciousness (see especially: Luckmann and Schutz 1989, Vol.II: 1-20) and therefore leaves room for Touraine's view.

Phenomenological sociology by its very nature is difficult to define: one could assert that it can only be practised, and never defined. I shall attempt here only to explain the utility of this approach for this piece of research.

According to Schutz, we cannot understand social actors from outside their 'bounded provinces of meaning', that is the sets of experiences which display coherent cognitive styles. The scholar – this is the conclusion which is directly relevant for a methodological approach – cannot understand actors unless (s)he takes part in their everyday life. This point has been the object of extensive criticism for its extreme relativism (e.g. Giddens 1976), but this is partially answered by another part of Schutz's thought. The object of phenomenological sociology for him is not the inaccessible Other, but rather the idealisations created by the natural way of dealing with reality in order to maintain a 'common world'. More concretely, the objects of inquiry are the everyday interpretative procedures which allow us to give a sense both

to our own and others' action. This intellectual project, which has been defined as the 'hermeneutics of social action', was continued separately by the ethnomethodologists and by phenomenological sociologists of knowledge. Both sides searched for a 'third' way between objectivism and subjectivism. Ethnomethodologists stress, among other things, the reflexivity and the interpretative ability of social actors – which has been confirmed in the case of trade union members (Corcuff 1994) – and the indexicality (the strong reference to experience) of meaning. Both points are particularly important in this study. The sociology of knowledge developed by Berger and Luckmann (1967), in turn, deals directly with the relationship between objective and subjective reality.

Berger and Luckmann maintain a bond with Marx, at least with the early Marx, who wrote in the manuscripts of 1844 that man's consciousness is determined by his social being. In this way the theoretical triangle I drew begins to close itself. On the other hand, the authors of *'The Social Construction of Reality'* also pay attention to the problem of consciousness, defined as the sedimentation of experiences and meanings (85). Consciousness, they argue, is always intentional – directed towards objects –, never simply existing 'as such' (34). In this way we can avoid the dangers of ideologism while concentrating on trade union consciousness.

Berger and Luckmann place themselves, although they avoid any reference to it in the body of their text, in the historical hermeneutic school, which developed concepts like *Standortsgebundenheit* (situational determination) or *Sitz im Leben* (seat in life) which are consistent with my approach to trade union consciousness. Yet there is a very particular point on which Berger and Luckmann's work offers a still unexploited potential for the interpretation of the post-communist experience. This is their discussion of transformation and of the extreme case of it, which they call 'alternation' but which recalls immediately today's 'transition' in post-communist societies.¹² Of course, 'alternation' is a very extreme case. Yet Berger and Luckmann themselves state that it is only a problem of degree: 'if the processes involved in the extreme case are clarified, those of less extreme cases will be understood more easily' (176). A long quotation is here useful.

Alternation requires processes of re-socialization. These processes resemble primary socialization, because they have radically to re-assign reality accents. (...) They are different from primary socialization because they do not start *ex nihilo*, and as a result must cope with a

problem of dismantling, disintegrating the preceding nomic structure of subjective reality. How can this be done?

A recipe for successful alternation has to include both social and conceptual conditions, the social, of course, serving as the matrix of the conceptual. The most important social condition is the availability of an effective plausibility structure, that is, a social base serving as the 'laboratory' of transformation. This plausibility structure will be mediated to the individual by means of significant others, with whom he must establish strongly affective identification. No radical transformation of subjective reality (including, of course, identity) is possible without such identification. (...)

The most important conceptual requirement for alternation is the availability of a legitimating apparatus for the whole sequence of transformation. What must be legitimated is not only the new reality, but the stages by which it is appropriated and maintained, and the abandonment or repudiation of all alternative realities. The nihilating side of the conceptual machinery is particularly important in view of the dismantling problem that must be solved. The old reality, as well as the collectivities and significant others that previously mediated it to the individual, must be reinterpreted within the legitimating apparatus of the new reality (...). This involves a reinterpretation of past biography *in toto*, following the formula 'Then I thought, now I know'. (176-179)

These arguments seem developed at a merely 'micro' level. Yet it is possible to elucidate, through this theory of socialisation, even the most 'macro' among social realities, notably international relations: a good example, in the case of the East-West relations, are the interpretations based on the concept of 'cooptation' and, precisely, 'socialisation' (Levy 1993).

Let us see how this applies to the case of trade union activists in privatised Polish companies, who experience transition at both the societal and work levels. The problem with transition is that although the goals are relatively clear (economic well-being and democracy), the stages by which they can be reached are not. The overwhelming majority of Eastern European citizens support reforms in opinion surveys, but at the same time they resist their implementation in the everyday life. The entire 'plausibility structure' of workers' lives must be revisited: why make any work effort? Why join the union? Why strike? These usually taken-for-granted questions become compelling. 'Alternation' can be seen as a profound process of reformulation of identities and ideologies, in which there is a risk that very old (e.g. ethnic) interpretations will re-emerge whenever no other 'plausibility structure' is available. Without a concern for the process of re-socialisation, it would be hard to understand the meaning of action in a period of profound change. Berger and Luckmann's work helps this understanding by evincing the role of socialization stages, of biographical reinterpretation and of 'significant others'. In our case, the 'significant others' are all

global actors, from the media to the multinational employer and, if present, foreign trade unions.

Phenomenological sociology helps also take the past into consideration without falling into historical determinism.

In addition to this reinterpretation *in toto* there must be particular reinterpretations of past events and persons with past significance. The alternating individual would, of course, be best off if he could completely forget some of these. But to forget completely is notoriously difficult. What is necessary, then, is a radical reinterpretation of the meaning of these past events or persons in one's biography. Since it is relatively easier to invent things that never happened than to forget those that actually did, the individual may fabricate and insert events wherever they are needed to harmonize the remembered with the reinterpreted past. (...) He may be perfectly sincere in such a procedure - subjectively, is not telling lies about the past but bringing it in line with the truth that necessarily, embraces both present and past. (...) Such partial transformations are common in contemporary society in connection with the individual's social mobility and occupational training (...). But these transformations typically fall far short of re-socialization. They build on the basis of primary internalization and generally avoid abrupt discontinuities within the subjective biography of the individual. As a result, they face the problem of maintaining consistency between the earlier and later elements of subjective reality. (...)

Broadly speaking, one may say that the procedures involved are of opposite character. In re-socialization the past is reinterpreted to conform to the present reality, with the tendency to retroject into the past various elements that were subjectively unavailable at the time. In secondary socialization the present is interpreted so as to stand in a continuous relationship with the past, with the tendency to minimize such transformations as have actually taken place. Put differently, the reality-base for re-socialization is the present, for secondary socialization the past. (180-182)

In short, the lesson to be learnt is that transition is a process of reinterpretation and of continuous work on the categories of present and past. The sociologist's task is therefore, less than of reconstructing the actual past (this job can be left to historians), that of observing how the discourse on the past influences the present. Polish trade union activists actually 'work' on their past. They search for continuity either in their relations of opposition (this is usually the case with Solidarity) or in their relations of co-operation (the former official trade unions). 'Alternation' is in both cases so interpreted as to give a coherent subjective sense of one's own action in both past and present. It becomes a pillar of the plausibility structure: 'the world has changed, so X was right then a Y is right now'. The Italy-Poland comparison will show how the experience of alternation influences the way of thinking of trade union activists, affecting for instance trust or attitudes towards innovation.

Interestingly enough, the phenomenological approach was generally banned from state-socialist academic sociology, which first ignored it, then ridiculed it (see

the typical Soviet attacks in Roll 1988 or Golenko and Kirsanov 1988, and a later positive revision in Rutkovitch 1990). After 1989, it suddenly became fruitful in the interpretation of change. Dessewffy (1992), for instance, criticises from a phenomenological point of view the representation of totalitarianism in cold-war literature. Moreover, through a focus on everyday life and on the individual as the unit of analysis, he makes a first attempt to reconstruct the belief systems of communism and their 'plausibility structures'. He can then attest that these systems and structures make understandable the actual behaviour of actors. Some use of Berger and Luckmann's theory is also made in post-communist industrial relations studies (e.g. Konecki and Kulpińska 1995).

This quick overview of different theorists should clarify the sense of the double triangle (Figure 1). Three concepts are used in order to understand trade unions: class, consciousness and the social construction of reality through experience. The first concept has been defined by starting from Marxism and Touraine's thought; the second one on the basis of Touraine's and phenomenological sociology; the last draws on phenomenological sociology and the early Marx. Concepts and theories are, despite appearances, interconnected. First, 'class' becomes a meaningful concept when it is used to refer to actors *consciously* taking part in a general social conflict. Secondly, consciousness is best defined as a crystallised form of *socially constructed* subjective reality. Finally, in the social construction of the trade unions a central role must be given to the experience of work conflict, a conflict historically capable of having a *class* nature. We can now define trade union class consciousness as the *socially constructed understanding of to the everyday experience of work conflict as a matter of societal relevance*. The components of this consciousness have already been mentioned in the previous chapter. In much simpler words (and unavoidably less precisely) to speak of class conscious workers we do not need to have political revolutionaries; it is sufficient to observe that workers are convinced that any supplementary effort made at work is to the exclusive advantage of the employer, unless workers collectively control (and possibly rule) production.

3. The theoretical grounds of a research project

I will now turn to the explanation of how the theory presented above may turn out to be meaningful for this piece of research.

Focusing on experience as a means to understand the trade unions is not without theoretical and practical consequences. For instance, Crouch, borrowing his evidence mainly from Goldthorpe and Lockwood (1969) and Batstone *et al.* (1977), builds a criticism of Olson's theory on the fact that in making choices workers draw on perceptions of their community and their workplace:

Crucial to the Olsonian theory of collective action is that the organization in question is so large that an individual member's contribution counts for nothing. At first sight national unions are such cases of 'mass' organizations, their membership running into hundreds of thousands. However, the reality of the union which the individual worker encounters is often a far more face-to-face group. There is considerable evidence from research that by 'the union' many workers mean the shop-floor organisation rather than the remote national body with its headquarters in London. (Crouch 1982: 65)

In the current period of transformation, the stress on experience is even more important. On the one hand, the experience of work seems to become more differentiated and linked in more complex ways to life-sphere experiences, with a consequent differentiation of workers' identities. On the other hand, no similar process in workers' experiences corresponds with the 'globalization', or even the 'Europeanization' of national economies. This means that today, more than in the past, the boundaries of experience do not correspond with the boundaries of interests, with important repercussions for the trade unions. The problem which emerges is whether social organisations, like trade unions, will be able to link the different levels of experience and interests, in the way political parties and other organisations have integrated experiences, identities and interests at the national level.

This piece of research will attempt to show that most differences between trade union activists in the West and in the East are not inherited but socially constructed. In other words, instead of saying – as most analysts do – that Eastern trade unions are *not yet* like their Western counterparts, we would rather argue that they are *no longer* like that.

3.1. Hypothesis 1

Let us look more closely at the working hypotheses of this research project. The first spoke of a unity in the disintegration of working class consciousness. In this case, a correct understanding of what class consciousness means is essential, and this was the aim of my theoretical explanation. The end of social class, that is, can hardly be comprehended through statistical data. It is the end of an identity due to the transformation of an experience, and interview-data are a more suitable source for testing it. I shall try to show that the components of identity, opposition and totality are no longer related, and that the experience of conflict at work (although it carries on) is no longer a source for collective consciousness.

Let me clarify a point that is implicit in the theoretical position I presented in the previous section. Putting class consciousness at the centre of the analysis, as the only concept with which the historical and social role of the workers' movement can be explained, by no means implies that *all* trade unions have *always* been class actors, nor that *all* work situations are mainly situations of class conflict. On the contrary, I aim with my approach to be as far from deterministic as possible. The point, already noted by Marx, is that trade union action has two sides, a 'class' side (job control) and a 'market' side (striving to reduce competition between workers on the labour market).¹³ The case-study of the Piombino steelworks, state-owned for half a century and located in a full-employment workers' community, will show this distinction in the clearest way when compared to the Fiat case. The lesson is the following. Not everywhere workers constituted a class, but where they did, their present is influenced by this character.¹⁴

If class consciousness is fragmented, it does not follow that we cannot study it: we can study precisely its *fragments*, the ruins still present in the consciousness of many activists. Without a reference to the 'class'-level past, as Berger and Luckmann show in their representation of 'alteration', today's discourse would hardly be understandable. Class still lives in some isolated counter-trends of unionism, but above all it still exists as an occasional interpretative resource, which indicates that it was experienced in the past.¹⁵ The fragmentation occurs in different ways in different places. Findings suggest that where its three elements are separated but reinterpreted

there is space for a recovery of trade unions. In other cases fragmentation reaches the level of *disintegration*: not only are the elements separated, but each one is decomposed, bewildered. In these cases trade unions tend to fall into proletarian fatalism or into a role of mere social agency. Where, finally, the three IOT components still exist and fit together, but only artificially – that is without a link with the real experience and social relations – the risk of ‘anti-social movements’ (Wieviorka 1991) appears.

I will make one last point about class consciousness, the main concept for the understanding of the first hypothesis. Detecting the conditions for the emergence of class consciousness cannot be the purpose of a limited case-study, and is not my interest. This is not to say that it is not an important sociological matter: on the contrary, it is a major issue that occasionally involved Marx and fully absorbed sociologists like Touraine or Burawoy. The point is that the research problem here is not the analysis of which conditions allowed (the past tense is not casual) class consciousness, but to examine the hypothesis of a disintegration of class. In the case of Eastern Europe, this means that the concern of some authors (e.g. Ost 1995 or Clarke 1996a) to explain why class politics do not emerge appears misplaced. The problem is that in Eastern European there is *no longer* space for class politics, rather than that there is *not yet* space for it. This is something radically different from arguing that there is no problem with the construction of *interest policies*. There is, but it is not a matter of class.¹⁶

3.2. Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis suggested a process of dualization is in train. This refers mainly to two orders of facts, both understandable from a phenomenological point of view. The first is that the experience of workers during transition is different from that of workers who do not go through it. The second is the development, or social construction, of a peculiar understanding of international processes and actors (including foreign investors and the workers of other countries), due to the peculiarity of the globalization experience. There are not (yet?) direct global experiences for the trade unions, so what happens is that conclusions are drawn from more limited

experiences. The case-studies will offer a few examples of how actors 'construct' for themselves the difference between East and West.

We can expect two kinds of differences between Poles and Italians. First, Berger and Luckmann's discourse on alternation suggests that in Poland a period of profound change fosters a deeper reflexivity in societies (or '*travail sur elles mêmes*', if we prefer Touraine's language to the ethnomethodological one). This is the reason why, in spite of the common sense, Eastern European workers may appear in some respects 'more modern' than their Western counterparts, for instance on a number of organisational matters. 'Modern' has not here any evaluative meaning: it only indicates that social processes are more rapid and more advanced – for instance, that of differentiation in working class consciousness.

At the same time, however, the drastic reformulation and simplification of interpretative categories should cause a strong 'economicism' and sometimes even tendencies to nationalism among Polish workers. This is not an inborn characteristic of the Poles (as their past has revealed) but a direct consequence of the *present* experience.

Current macro-level change has a different meaning when seen 'from below' instead of from outside. The pioneering studies on informal relations in the post-communist enterprise strongly confirm a need for such a change of perspective (Clarke 1996b; Alashev and Kiblitkaya 1996). In an East-West comparative perspective, this will imply an opposition between the experience of 'alternation' in the East and that of 'crisis' (of industry, of the trade unions...) in the West. Where social change appears under the form called alternation this involves a number of ruptures sometimes consistent neither with the past nor the present, but only with the *alternation* itself. Some consequences for collective consciousness and action will be drawn.

A last point on the second working hypothesis. Readers will have already protested: the experience of Western workers is different because they are richer! Yes, of course, but I would play down the significance (the direct causal effect) of this factor. On the one hand, the informal economy, especially in the East, is so important that it is impossible to use nominal earnings as an indicator of total income (see again

Alasheev and Kiblitckaya 1996). One of the findings of my research is precisely the influence of informal second jobs. On the other, and rather more important, without reference to work and life experiences income indicators are unable to explain the construction and the crisis of class consciousness. The interview data will reveal that there is not a 'needs scale' as supposed by Maslow, but that there are different interpretative resources to express needs. Polish workers did not become poorer between 1980 and 1998, yet they transformed their claims from a class and moral language to an economicistic one. In conclusion, the difference of income does matter, but not very directly. More important are the stronger differentiation among spheres of experience in the West and the new relevance of monetary interpretative categories in the East. These contexts lead workers to different self-consciousnesses.

3.3. Hypothesis 3

I have already mentioned that the issue of differentiation has become central for the trade unions. This point could be argued through stratification data, but an interpretative point of view can show how the process of differentiation works in the actors' consciousness and, possibly, where remedies could be sought.

The idea of class implied an image of unity. This image was sometimes more important than the actual reality of stratification in society and in the plant. This point can best be appreciated by considering the case of Italy. Here the ideological domination of the mass-worker (*operaio massa*) image occurred in a period when mass-workers were a marginal portion of the labour force. Class consciousness was indeed historically powerful, yet was not suitable for dealing with diversity. This can be seen, as well as with respect to *internal* differences, in the case of cross-national differences. Internationalist mottoes notwithstanding, trade unions' ideologies had little success in building cross-national identities (Crouch 1996), and common consciousness rarely went beyond a simple feeling of similarity.

An individual (unionized) worker may possess a 'positive' commitment to internationalism amounting to little more than a vague sense that employed people everywhere share some important life experiences simply because they are wage or salary earners (...). Such subjective internationalism may be largely emotional or 'affective' but always contains some cognitive elements - ways of looking at the world - which might be developed into more clearly shaped forms by better information or education. (...)

When enterprise-level representatives who had experienced them described international personal contacts with colleagues from other countries, they almost invariably did so with evident pleasure at discovering how many common everyday attitudes, interests, and perspectives were shared across frontiers. An underlying cultural identity offsetting political nationalism was, then, widely perceived. In the terms used here, a 'natural' subjective internationalism was deemed to exist amongst employee groups in each country. (Rose 1987: 182, 190)

This kind of limited common identity has proved to be fragile. Once weakened, the sociological problem is seeking other sources of solidarity. The simple recognition of common interests does not seem sufficient. Avoiding competition between employees of different nations is as important as was, in the nineteenth century, avoiding competition between workers in the same area. The problem is what can replace the experience of work in giving an enduring, everyday character to the recognition of common interests.

The collapse of traditional mass production, the increase of women's labour market participation, and the destructive impact of the mass-media on communities 'unmake' the working class. As a consequence, 'workforce heterogeneity now approximates the heterogeneity of the broader society' (Cohen and Rogers 1994: 141). This is not, despite appearances, a simple macro-sociological statement. As the word 'unmaking' suggests, it is a complex process, starting from the neighbourhood and ending with culture. Along the way, old solidarities and above all socialisation practices are undermined. Can new solidarities appear? The presence of common interests across different groups seems unlikely to be able to replace class consciousness in building collective action. Cohen and Rogers continue by identifying precisely the point: new solidarities will be linked to citizenship, to the elaboration of comprehensive views. The issue is 'decolonizing the life world', creating arenas of discussion outside the formal political system and not mediated by money and power: 'pursuing discussion in the context of enduring differences among participants would incline parties to be more reflective' (Cohen and Rogers 1994: 155).

It is not imperative to accept the idea of citizenship as the solution for acknowledging that the problem does indeed lie in the 'decolonization' of the *Lebenswelt* and in the creation of arenas of communication, a new public sphere in Habermas' terms.

This point can in turn be expressed in Touraine's terms as a need for a shift from class to subjectivity, defined as a combination of identity and rationality (Touraine 1992; 1997). The idea of subjectivity will lead me to analyse, in the activists' interviews, issues such as the personal project or the professional path. Moreover, I shall investigate the construction, through the interplay of different experiences, of a movement of 'double emancipation' from the market and the community. Finally, I shall verify whether this *mouvement de subjectivation* is related to an acceptance of the Other at the global and the local level.

The issue of subjectivation is the one that helps the theoretical approach presented here to remain useful at the moment when class disappears. Subjectivation can be seen as a new way of constructing consciousness through experiences (notice the plural) while remaining capable of taking part in conflicts (notice the plural), as the working class was. 'Class' was already a mediation between human aspirations and rationality. Therefore, one can expect that a tradition of working class consciousness and labour movement (two sides of the same phenomenon, like status and role) will help further subjectivation more than simple workers' communities would. In workers' communities, trade union activism was more a social obligation than a human uprising. The concept of subjectivation, drawn from Touraine's recent work, is on the other hand not far from Berger and Luckmann's thought, although they use the much more ambiguous term 'individualization'. Their statement is perfectly consistent with Touraine's idea of emancipation from the community:

The possibility of 'individualism' (that is, of individual choice between discrepant realities and identities) is directly linked to the possibility of unsuccessful socialization. (Berger and Luckmann 1967: 190)

This is the reason why in a period of de-socialisation, sociology must shift its forms to the categories of experience and subjectivity.

Au bout du compte, s'opère une sorte de séparation de la subjectivité de l'individu et de l'objectivité de son rôle (...). La socialisation n'est pas totale, non parce que l'individu échappe au social, mais parce que son expérience s'inscrit dans des registres multiples et non congruents. C'est là ce qui fonde ce que l'on pourra considérer comme l'autonomie de l'individu. (Dubet 1994: 96)

In this emancipation from the community two peripheral groups might become the 'vanguard': younger and female workers. Interviews will show whether their attitudes towards the trade unions are distinctive. Moreover, it will be investigated

whether women are more likely to articulate work and life-sphere experience, and whether they prompt trade unions to a deeper self-analysis and renewal. Young workers, on the other hand, are emerging, in the long wave of the '60s and '70s, as a category within the working class. Generation conflicts are a very new problem for the trade unions, and they are particularly manifest on pension-system and welfare-state issues. The inquiry will reveal that young workers break former 'class' solidarities (e.g. slow-down practices) but they also start to raise typical 'subject' issues and bring more tolerance into union organisation.

In this process of re-elaboration of trade union consciousness through the combination of experiences, communication, and the acceptance of differences, Italian trade unions have a structural advantage. As the interviews will show, workers' lives are more differentiated, complex, and include more free time in Italy than in Poland. Typical post-industrial issues (environment protection, anti-discrimination policies, training) are therefore more familiar in Italy. Yet a closer look will reveal that not only is this advantage likely to be short-term, but it is also not generalisable to all Western situations. More important than the 'structure' of social life is its social construction, and above all the existence of communication channels.

4. A leap into the past

4.1. *An assumption on the Polish past*

The argument about the general comparability of Poland and Italy has already been presented in the previous chapter. The three hypotheses on trade union consciousness involve however an assumption: that in the past important parallelisms existed between Italian and Polish workers. This piece of research, which strives to be sociological and not historical, will test this assumption but is not in a position to demonstrate it. I refer the reader instead to the secondary literature. An exhaustive discussion of the assumption would require a supplementary dissertation, and I am pleased to leave something for later scholars in search of a topic.

The issue will be addressed (especially in chapter 3) by analysing the views of the past which emerge from interviews. The presence of working-class resistance and

of similar forms of disintegration in both the Polish and the Italian data would be consistent with the idea of a past similarity.

However, that Solidarity was 'something of the kind of the Western labour movement' remains anything but a universally accepted point: the dispute would be heated. This historical question is important here because of the relevance of the past in present representations. In situations where unionism previously represented a class movement, this still affects its patterns of action.

I will give no consideration to whether Italian unionism displayed a class character, since the consensus on this point is sufficiently broad. Of course, were 'class' given a different meaning (in particular if it were to mean 'objective social category'), it could be easily demonstrated, as Sylos Labini (1975) did, that the working class in Italy has never existed. However, if 'class' is first of all a meaning of action, then in few other places (one of which is probably Poland) were the unions so concerned by the goal of ruling the factories.

The next section will therefore deal with the Polish past, as regards the experience of socialism in general, and Solidarity in particular.

4.2. *Interpreting the communist past*

Comparing Polish strikers with those in the West has been quite an agreeable intellectual exercise for several theorists, as the following extracts suggest.

How can Giddens seriously believe that the labour process is intrinsic to class relations under capitalism alone, and not to class relations under other systems, such as socialism? Such a proposition implies that the class character of the proletariat in capitalist society is profoundly different, in some unexplained way, from the character of the socialist proletariat. The Polish workers, to take a notable example, appear to behave as if they are quite unaware of any such difference. (Parkin 1980: 891)

The British miners never managed to rally the same scale of allies as the Polish engineers or miners, and Arthur Scargill never became the world's darling, like Lech Walesa. But the East-West irony in looking at the Polish-British mirror is well worth noting. Polish and British workers in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s fought for basically the same things, certain short-term protective devices in a world where the bosses were not trusted. The workers' mistrust and militancy were perceived by the government, and the economists of both Britain and Poland as a major obstacle to accumulation. Edward Heath and James Callaghan were politically destroyed by the defensive workers' movement as were Wladyslaw Gomulka and Edward Gierek.

But the Thatcher's Tories, working in a parliamentary democratic country, albeit largely helped by the peculiarities of the British constitution, finally succeeded where a whole series of Polish Communist General Secretaries with more or less dictatorial powers had failed, even when deploying the army. The British unions were brought to heel, and their most combative

sections shoved off onto the dole. The admiration which a number of frustrated Polish officials of the 1980s had for Mrs Thatcher is understandable. (Therborn 1995: 328)

The main source for the argument that there is a parallel between Polish and Western working class consciousness is Touraine's analysis of the Solidarity movement (Touraine, Dubet, Wieviorka and Strzelecki 1982), already mentioned in the previous chapter. Two years later, in his work on the workers' movement in general, Touraine stated that class consciousness was to be found at its highest level among Silesian workers (Touraine, Dubet and Wieviorka 1984: 72). According to Touraine (1978), communist societies, although engaged in a radically different *mode de développement* when compared to their capitalist counterparts, share with the latter the same '*type sociétal*', that is both belong to the industrial society.

This argument, which allows both *convergence theory* and neo-Darwinian arguments of an innate Slavic backwardness to be avoided, nonetheless requires some elucidation. In fact, the nature of the working class in communist societies is an open issue, not only for sociologists but also for historians.

The history of the labour movement under the conditions of communist dictatorships is a major research problem that awaits resolution. (Kocka 1997: 75)

There are a number of sources that confirm the argument that an equivalent working class consciousness exists in both Poland and Italy.

As regards state socialism as a whole, basic similarities with capitalist societies have been claimed by important sociologists like Aron, Bell, Dahrendorf, or Lipset. More particularly with respect to work conflict, parallelisms with capitalist societies were noted among others by Bendix (1956: especially 429ff) and Burawoy (1985), and confirmed by personal accounts from the communist world (e.g. Haraszti 1977). In fact, since Lenin's times, Soviet organisation of work has borrowed a number of ideas from Western practices, tending to destroy the autonomy of the worker. Others, on the contrary, point out important differences in work organisation (e.g. Beissinger 1989; Andreff 1993; Boyer 1993); or argue that class relations in the Soviet enterprise were completely different from those under capitalism (e.g. Clarke 1996a). However, their arguments are either orthodox Marxist (giving the decisive role to the ownership of the means of production) or orthodox neo-liberal (giving the decisive role to the market position of the firm). They disregard work conflict as

defined in the previous section.¹⁷ Moreover, in-depth case studies (e.g. Rolle 1995) reject Andreff's and Boyer's thesis that in the Soviet social compromise there was no work discipline. The experience of Russian workers was certainly not that they had light work, and even Breznev's era was experienced as a period dominated by growth imperatives. Lane's (1987) analysis confirms the existence of important affinities between Taylorism and the Soviet NOT (*nauchnaya organizatsiya truda* – scientific organisation of work). It also confirms that in the Soviet enterprise too there was pressure on workers to increase their effort.

A common assumption underlying Soviet thinking (as indeed managerial thinking everywhere) is that the level of effort could and should be increased. (...) The objective of wage policy is to use wages as an incentive for greater effort on the part of the employees and to reward the quality as well as the quantity of labour. At the same time, to avoid inflation, planners have to ensure that wages rise less than productivity. (116-117)

In a sense, then it is possible to talk of the 'making of an industrial working-class' even for Stalin's Russia (Strauss 1997). In conclusion, Burawoy's statement is perhaps the best assessment of this issue:

The secret of all factory despotism lies in the dependence of material survival upon performance at work. It is this dependence that gives managers their coercive whip. But it can assume different forms. (Burawoy 1997: 81)

4.3. The nature of Solidarity

Poland was the least 'totalitarian' of the Eastern bloc states and therefore the one in which there was the greatest chance that a labour movement would emerge. One could say that work conflict existed everywhere in the Soviet system, but only in Poland (and in other rare situations, like Gorbachev's USSR) could class consciousness develop. In fact, class conflict requires a degree of diversification and dialectics, while under totalitarianism only conflict between individual and system is perceivable: under these circumstances, it is correct to say that the working class dissolved in a '*Gesellschaft der Werktätigen*', as the GDR has been defined (Ernst, Klinger and Timm 1998). I shall therefore concentrate on a specific comparison of Solidarity with Western working-class action, starting by discussing Touraine's findings.

According to the Franco-Polish research team, Solidarity as a trade union is not only the company-level organisation of a wider political movement: its trade

union action is above all 'class' action. A long extract is necessary to make the point clearer.

Dans tous nos groupes de recherche, mais surtout à Katowice et à Gdansk, abondent les définitions de l'action syndicale en termes de lutte de classes, même quand ce vocabulaire n'est pas celui des militants. Pour les mineurs, la tâche principale du syndicat est d'être 'contre le patron'; à Gdansk, Marian (...) explique: '(...) Je voulais qu'on atteigne les buts pour lesquels on avait lutté en 1970, qu'il y ait de meilleures conditions de travail, qu'il n'y ait plus le travail monotone des ouvriers qui travaillent du matin au soir et ensuite vont au café (...). Je voulais que le travail soit mieux organisé, parce que très souvent on nous donnait des délais qui ne convenaient pas. (...). Ce travail n'était pas lucratif. Souvent on améliorait la situation de tous les ouvriers de toute la Pologne.' En Silésie revient souvent le mot exploitation.

La première tâche des syndicats libres doit être de défendre les travailleurs contre l'employeur et d'obtenir pour eux de meilleures conditions de travail et de rémunération, en libérant aussi les ouvriers de l'arbitraire, de l'incompétence et de la corruption de leurs chefs. Les mineurs ont la plus vive conscience d'être la base productive du pays; sans le charbon, son extraction et sa transformation, la vie économique du pays s'écroulerait. Or, assurément mieux payés que les autres catégories professionnelles, ils se sentent soumis à des méthodes et des conditions de travail brutales, dans lesquelles leur santé et leur vie sont méprisées et sacrifiées.

Rien ne distingue ce langage de celui des ouvriers des grandes entreprises occidentales soumis à la loi du rendement et du profit. (...) les ouvriers polonais se plaignent comme la plupart des autres de ne pas comprendre leur feuille de paye et y voient la preuve qu'ils ne sont pas payés pour leur travail, qu'ils sont volés. Les ouvriers polonais ne font pas aux maîtres de l'économie les mêmes reproches que les ouvriers des pays capitalistes: ils les accusent plus d'incompétence et de corruption que d'esprit de profit; en revanche, ils font les mêmes critiques à leur maîtres directs, à ceux qui fixent les conditions de travail, de rémunération, d'exercice et d'autorité. (Touraine, Dubet, Wieviorka and Strzelecki 1982: 70-72)

The authors went on to remark that Solidarity displayed very clearly the two sides of working class consciousness. The positive, offensive side was evident in their constructive orientation and in the deep solidarity of the strongest categories with the weakest (as in the case of the doctors striking for nurses' rights, or of the Gdansk workers who, having just obtained substantial material gains, pursued their protest to extend these gains to workers in the other companies). The second, defensive side was frequently expressed in the need for protection against the worsening of living conditions. The two complementary sides were kept together by an increasing feeling, already noted in Polish surveys, that social gaps were widening (Nowak 1979). This 'class' character of Solidarity was in any case present in the widespread suspicion of 'experts' (union counsellors) and in the rule allowing only employees to join the union, which, for example, caused the isolation of the student movement.

The coexistence of both sides of class consciousness is confirmed by the account of one of the main Solidarity experts, Jacek Kuroń, who as early as 1979,

while organising assistance to persecuted workers with the KOR (Committee for Workers' Defence), remarked:

Je découvrais peu à peu que dans chaque concentration ouvrière en Pologne l'un et l'autre milieu coexistaient côte à côte. Le premier rassemble les ouvriers hautement qualifiés, qui travaillent depuis des années dans la même entreprise; le second, des gens peu ou pas du tout qualifiés, toujours à la poursuite d'un salaire, qui changent souvent de lieu de travail. L'attribution d'un appartement, l'organisation de vacances, la possibilité d'acheter des machines à laver et des téléviseurs lient les ouvriers qualifiés à leur entreprise. Leur revenu dépend de la réalisation du plan de l'entreprise. Ils y sont très attachés. 'Nous, les émailleurs', disaient mes amis de Grudziądz, qui travaillaient à l'usine d'émaillage locale, même ceux qui avaient été licenciés après juin 1976. La stabilité et la régularité de leur vie sont liées à leur lieu de travail. Ils travaillent et vivent au sein d'une communauté. La situation des ouvriers non qualifiés est caractérisée avant tout par un manque de stabilité. (...)

Ces deux sous-groupes culturels: les ouvriers qualifiés et les non-qualifiés, entretiennent un rapport très différent à la grève. Les uns s'y décident facilement, car ils ne sont pas liés affectivement à l'entreprise, mais il leur est difficile de l'organiser, car ils n'y jouissent pas d'un grand prestige. Les seconds, c'est le contraire. Les premiers étaient nos clients de bureau d'intervention; les seconds, par fierté, ne voulaient pas longtemps s'adresser à nous. 'on ne veut pas d'aumônes.' (Kuroń 1993: 98-99)

A few pages later, Kuroń declares that Lech Wałęsa managed to combine these two groups. Kuroń's political and historical statement corresponds quite well, in sociological terms, to the idea that the workers' movement welds the proletarians with the 'proud workers' or aristocracy of labour.

With respect to Touraine's classic analysis (the role of the social relations of production at work), there are, in fact, other data which make the issue more complex. Most notable is the international comparative surveys on workers' consciousness launched by the Japanese Denki Roren Trade Union Centre for Social Research and carried out in 1984 on electronic plants in eight countries (Japan, Sweden, West Germany, Italy, United Kingdom, Poland, Yugoslavia and Hungary).¹⁸ These surveys showed a gap between Eastern and Western countries, including between Italy and Poland (Table 1).

Eastern European workers displayed a much higher affinity with their superiors than their Western counterparts. This point – if we accept respondents' answers as reliable, which is not self-evident in non-democratic countries – would undermine Touraine's analysis, based on the social relations of production. Yet this can be partially explained by the different social hierarchy within socialist firms. In Eastern Europe it was observed (and sometimes still is) that the direct superiors (*brygadziści* in Polish) had less authority than in the West, and that they were treated

as fellows by the other workers. Still now, the lowest-level supervisors in Poland are more unionised than the average (Gardawski 1999: 93). Real authority started at the foremen's (*maistrowie*) level, and was mostly held by different boards, such as the party organisation and management. As far as the managers are concerned, the class consciousness of Polish workers seemed to be much closer to that observed in the capitalist world. With regard to workers' collective interest definition, both Italy and Poland emerge as particularly compact.

Table 1 - Industrial workers and interests' convergence

| Do you think that the interests of workers are convergent with those of the following groups? (Yes answers among workers) Source: own elaboration from Cichomski and Morawski (1988) | | | | |
|--|-------|--------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| | Italy | Poland | Capitalist countries mean | State-socialist countries mean |
| -direct superiors | 42.7 | 63.5 | 35.5 | 67.3 |
| -managers | 14.6 | 29.7 | 17.3 | 49.0 |
| -workers | 90.4 | 84.2 | 71.4 | 80.4 |
| -trade unions in the workplace | 73.6 | 37.2 | 54.6 | 54.4 |

Table 1 gives rise to another consideration with respect to the Polish trade unions, and more generally to the risks of comparative surveys. In 1984, just after the martial law period, the only trade unions admitted to the workplaces were the reconstructed official trade unions (OPZZ). The lack of trust in them among Polish workers is an indicator of the presence of class consciousness rather than the opposite, which the authors seem to believe.

Touraine's interpretation aroused some criticism (Goldfarb 1989; Scott 1991; Martell and Stammers 1996). There has been quite a lively debate on 'Who done Solidarity'. Significantly, the greater part of the debate took place abroad. It was as if the 'class' nature of that movement had been embarrassing, though for different reason, in both past and current Polish political systems.

Laba (1991) and Goodwyn (1991) categorically defend the working-class character of Solidarity. Laba recalls some aspects that exhibit a striking parallelism with the Italian situation. An example is the very egalitarian claim of equal rises in wages for everybody (and not in percentage terms). This is equivalent of the Italian *aumenti uguali per tutti*, the spontaneous claim of Italian workers during the *autunno*

caldo, and of the *punto unico di scala mobile* considered as the most advanced achievement (or the most absurd, according to one's point of view) of the Italian labour movement in the '70s. A different argument, although reaches a similar conclusion, is presented by Staniszkis (although she suggests that under state socialism collective representations are more important than social stratification (Staniszkis 1989)). According to her, Solidarity rejected the state-corporatism model, giving rise to a 'class, rather than corporatist, form of interest representation' (Staniszkis 1984: 40). Solidarity's rejection of branch organisation in favour of a regionally based structure can be cited as evidence of this point. We might also note that in Italy the local, horizontal structure of the *Camere del Lavoro* is emblematic of the unions' class nature.

In the accounts by Ash (1983), Bakuniak and Nowak (1987), Kennedy (1991), and Bernhard (1992; 1993) the role of workers as a class emerges sharply, but it is not treated as exclusive or 'causal' as it is by Laba. Kennedy, in particular, shows the importance of social alliances for Solidarity. However, it emerges even from his account that the technicians' contribution occurred in a second moment, and rather at the 'margins' of Solidarity, that is in the self-management movement whose class character was much less clear.

A few analysts, finally, have contested the idea that Solidarity is a working class movement, especially by stressing the intellectuals' role (e.g. Kubik 1994a; Ost 1990; Pakulski 1993; Tymowski 1991; Osa 1997). Many of their arguments could be reassessed through a discussion of the meaning of class they adopt. In some cases the meaning of these critics goes no further than the incontestable observation that Solidarity was not *only* a trade union. The most elaborate and systematic version of this argument goes further. Kubik suggests that the concept of class should be substituted with the Weberian concept of status (1994a) and develops an alternative, cultural-anthropological explanation (1994b). Interestingly enough, the stress on political and cultural factors brings Kubik (in 1994) to conclude that 'by 1992 Solidarity – this unique social reality – disappeared from the social landscape almost without a trace' (Kubik 1994a: 461). Closer attention to workplaces would probably have avoided such a major mistake (although this is absolutely forgivable in the

unpredictable Eastern Europe of the last ten years). Theoretically more important is to note that Kubik himself acknowledges that things would be different if one used a more culturalist concept of social class, a type of conceptualisation which has actually proved to be useful in dealing with Solidarity (e.g. Rychard 1988). The unsuitability of orthodox Marxist theory does not prevent the suitability of a more elaborate concept of class. This is also valid as regards interpretations which speak of civil society rather than of working class (Arato 1981).

My interpretation, following Touraine's, by no means takes an orthodox class approach. In a word, it places itself halfway between Laba and Kubik's extremes. Nobody would seriously argue that Solidarity was *only* a labour movement, least of all Touraine, who spoke of the triple social, national, and democratic nature of Solidarity. After all, his method of 'sociological intervention' is aimed at detecting the 'highest', and not the 'central' meaning of a movement's action. In the case of Solidarity, the presence of other meanings explains why so many people not strictly belonging to the working class, like administrators, technicians, foremen and even directors, joined the union, albeit in smaller numbers than industrial workers.¹⁹

My own investigation suggests that the class character of Solidarity was not even its most important component. This seems to be confirmed by the fact that in the region where the Franco-Polish team detected the highest level of class consciousness (Silesia) Solidarity was weak during martial law, unable for instance to engage in underground activity. Moreover, after 1989 many Solidarity activists effortlessly jumped to entrepreneurship or senior management. However, the historical problem of the relative weight of the different components in the Solidarity of the '80s is here secondary. Touraine's investigation showed that each one of the Solidarity's three elements (social, democratic, and national) was essential. What is important is to state that a class component was *both present and significant*, not that it was the *most important* one.

4.4. 1980-81 research evidence revisited

Empirically, the task here is to find evidence consistent with the definition of class employed in this work. It is better to focus neither on the demands of the official unions, since they often hide different meanings (the best example is the issue of self-



management, as Touraine among others revealed), nor on textual rhetoric, well analysed by Laba (1991) but too much a reflection of the political circumstances. In order to focus attention on the rank-and-file level, and to avoid discontinuity with the evidence that will be presented in the next chapters, I shall concentrate on oral data similar to mine. I shall discuss the four most important sources. The first is Touraine's research itself, whose materials have never been exploited beyond the already extensively quoted 1982 book, and on which I carried out a secondary analysis. The other sources are three very little known inquiries carried out by Polish sociologists, stopped by martial law and published only many years later. To finish, I shall also mention two sources of a different methodological nature, which were also published only after 1989: a nation-wide survey and an extensive analysis of Solidarity's written sources.

Three 'interventions sociologiques'

Touraine *et al*'s book *Solidarité*, in spite of its truly sociological nature, had an unavoidably newsworthy character, for it was published only a few months after Jaruzelski's *golpe*. In addition, it represented solely the French view (the Polish side of the team did not contribute to the drafting since as well as the Solidarity experiment, martial law also interrupted the Franco-Polish sociological dialogue). I therefore decided to carry out, eighteen years later and with a different historical and geographical perspective, some secondary analysis on those materials.²⁰

Touraine's research was principally constituted by six groups of *intervention sociologique*,²¹ entirely composed by rank-and-file workers, and organised in six towns in two consecutive phases (June-July and October-November 1981). While examining the fourteen large files of meeting transcripts, I concentrated on the three *interventions* of the first phase, carried out in Warsaw, Gdańsk, and Katowice. The choice is due to the fact that in the summer 1981 Solidarity was still at its highest level of action, while in the autumn it was already concerned with the deepening political crisis. I shall discuss here only the issue of the class nature of Solidarity, but I shall mention the materials on other topics later in the thesis.

The *interventions sociologiques* with Solidarity had an advantage, that of collecting people from different realities, which becomes a disadvantage if one is

primarily concerned with work matters. The groups' members came from different work settings, and in Gdańsk and Warsaw none of the interlocutors represented the 'class adversary' in a strict sense (plant directors or foremen). As a consequence, the discussions were rarely about the details of productive issues. The weight of the work conflict is therefore rather underestimated than overestimated, as it would have probably happened if homogenous workers' groups had been analysed. The debate, by contrast, easily reached the higher levels of social movement action. In this regard, it may be said that if there was any 'seduction', it was not of the activists by the researchers but the opposite. Opposition, for instance, was readily expressed in philosophical-cultural terms, and the groups preferred the discussions with political interlocutors to those held with experts, directors or economists. The 'total social movement' nature of Solidarity is manifest all through the materials.

However, from time to time work-centred principles come into view. In Warsaw, the guest from the official unions is assailed by the activists' group with such severity that by the end he had to acknowledge himself that '*at the plant level, unions' activity was actually nothing*'. In general, the activists often define themselves on the basis of their plant of origin, showing how their experience was in any case almost totally concentrated on the workplace. The class (and therefore necessarily partial and not total) nature of Solidarity emerges also from the clear distinction between the tasks of the union and those of the work councils: the first must defend the employees, the second one the enterprises altogether. In Gdańsk, it was denied that salary increases were a main preoccupation for the union (this point contrasts with what we shall see among the activists of the '90s). A strong, typically 'blue-collar' diffidence towards intellectuals appears in the words of some activists: 'the intellectuals are simply lazybones: the normal workers are more combative; these intellectuals, we should simply kick them out'.

The most interesting group from the perspective of class consciousness was the one in Katowice, in Silesia. The analysis must be cautious because the group represented almost exclusively the mining sector (six miners and two mining machine production workers), which is known the world over for its very particular culture. The primary 'working class' feature of the Silesian activists, which is reminiscent of

remarks by historians of the working class like Hoggart or Hobsbawm or by sociologists like Parkin, is their active resistance to external ideas and formulations. They instinctively opposed any hypothesis advanced by the researchers, with a strength not encountered in other groups, or even in most of the other social movements studied using the same method. In this way, they confirmed the cultural foundation and separateness of the Silesian working class.

Although the Katowice group, like the others, also manifested the three democratic, national and social orientations, the working-class elements were clearer than elsewhere. A feeling of exploitation was reported to have been the fundamental reason for the first strikes in 1980. The workers claimed control over task definition and the organisation of working time, contested the salary system, and denounced supervisors' behaviour. The class divide also affected representations of welfare and of life-styles.

In the mines, the technicians were separated from the working people. They had excursions organised separately for them, they had completely different benefits, they received flats in different ways. The miners were annoyed by this situation. [a miner from the Katowice group]

In conclusion, the union was not simply the work-level manifestation of a political struggle. On the contrary, the opposition to the official unions and to the ruling party was expressed in class terms.

When workers' unions establish themselves, the employers automatically establish their own unions. In my view, at this moment the branch unions represent the employers' union. [a machine production worker from the Katowice group]

The Polish Unified Workers' Party [the ruling communist party] after 1956 [the year of the bloody repression of Poznań workers] no longer has the right to call itself a workers' party. A party that orders the shooting of workers is not a workers' party. There are more intellectuals than workers in the party now, but a workers' party ought to be made up of workers. We know that it is possible to win everything thanks to the workers. We need to create a workers' mentality by any means. [a miner from the Katowice group]

A study of the birth of Solidarity

Leaving Touraine aside, the working-class character of Solidarity on the shop-floor is palpable in the unpublished interview materials of a 1980 inquiry. This was carried out in 15 plants (among others the *Huta Warszawa* analysed also by this piece of research) by sociologists from Warsaw University but was stopped by the authorities. In 1983 one hundred copies of the research report were printed by the

University of Warsaw with the label 'for staff use only' (Bakuniak, Banaszak, Krzemiński and Kruczowska 1983).²² Subsequently some shorter accounts were published, again in small numbers, at the very beginning of democratisation (Krzemiński 1989). An overview of these materials has finally been made available in a recent publication (Krzemiński 1997).

Even if in his commentary Krzemiński rejects a class analysis in favour of the concept of community, the findings speak for themselves. They reveal that, contrary to the conventional wisdom, Solidarity's earliest demands were not made in reaction to a rise in prices, but only in reaction to the requirement for increased productivity. That is, the demands emerged not from distributive arguments, but from 'class' arguments against exploitation.

In the Spring and early Summer they implemented the 'salary regulation', which consisted of a major increase in salaries, but also increased productivity, which in fact caused not an increase but a drop in earnings as related to effort. Workers in many plants did not realise the consequences of these changes. In the Summer of 1980 the new pay system and the new production norms became effective. The workers' awakening to this salary fraud occurred at the same time as the rise in prices of meat and the increase of shortages, and the wave of protests exploded all across the country. (Krzemiński 1997: 62)

Interview extracts are even clearer:

'First they gave us an increase, and then they said that we have to increase production by 250 pieces (...). Some bloody increase it is when I have to sweat to get my production up...' (*idem*: 64)

Other findings by Krzemiński's team confirm the working class nature of Solidarity. Not only were the unions' typical shop-floor tasks of primary importance – and not limited to salary demands which were rather secondary (Bakuniak 1983b: 312-313) – but work conflict also played a decisive role. The workers reported:

'For years nobody helped us. If someone complained about something, nothing ever happened. A bloke²³ didn't know whether to go to the supervisor on his knees because he was just a worker or what. Now it's somehow better. When he knows that his mates will back him up, a bloke will fight for his rights'. (Kruczkowska 1983: 599)

'It has already changed, things are better for us somehow, because now a worker comes to work self-confident, the supervisor doesn't shout so much any more, he doesn't frighten anymore (...). The supervisors can't just do what they like any more. They used to be the lords and masters and they did, didn't they, whatever they wanted and nobody sided with the workers'. (600)

The emergence of Solidarity was then not merely a reaction to a situation of crisis.²⁴ It was much more rooted in a cultural opposition and in work conflict which had already started to be socially constructed. Krzemiński's team reminds us that,

especially in the case of the Huta Warszawa, during the 70's there had already been work stoppages linked to effort bargaining (Bakuniak 1983a: 70).

Still other typically working-class attitudes are revealed. The major indignation about organisational waste reveals a positive image of industrial production, and is confirmed by some accounts given by the protagonists (e.g. Bujak 1991). Also stressed is the important role played by manual production workers, even though the common view speaks of the leading role played by the technical elite in Solidarity.

Our interlocutors show that the most active group in the organisation of the trade union were the production workers, people from the lowest level. Engineers, older workers and white-collar workers were more afraid rather than less. (Krzemiński 1997: 140)

The reference to work conflict was only the first step towards a wider consciousness, which if it is not defined by Krzemiński as class consciousness, certainly was rooted in personal experience.

The crystallisation of the social tie in the workplace during strike actions in the summer of 1980 was the first concrete sign of the construction of an all-Polish feeling of community. (...) A feeling of community of interests appeared, a feeling that everyone's situation was the same, and against this background developed a representation of those who eventually experienced that similarity. (77-78)

Other parts of this account are consistent in other ways with the theoretical grounds I have chosen here, revealing a process of social construction of the labour movement. A common definition of the situation, Krzemiński writes, is the condition for mobilisation. This suggestion is confirmed by the fact that the leading workshop was always the toolroom or a comparable workshop, that is the workshop where interactions among workers were most frequent (72). Although their commitment stemmed from the workplace, protagonists were aware that their action affected the whole society. The following interview extract expresses quite well the centrality of the workers' role.

'[We deal with] anything which concerns workers and people (*człowiek*). This is a very broad concept, because even ensuring the supply on the market concerns the worker, because the worker is a worker not only when he's at work. When he also exits from the workplace, he still is a worker.' (Bakuniak 1983b: 317)

The difference of the Eastern economic system, with for instance the relevance of the supply problem, did not exclude a feeling of exploitation and of class conflict. It is more correct to say that in state socialist societies a variation of the feeling of exploitation was manifest, which eventually was at least as strong as in the capitalist

world. The relevance of the company not only for the economy, but also for broader social organisation, allowed workers to perceive national wealth as *their* product. They subsequently concluded that this wealth was largely expropriated by the ruling élite. Anything that was produced, from buildings to services, was a product of their work, and it belonged to them – since it was either materially produced by them or it was at least paid for with the factory's money. This peculiar form of the perception of exploitation is important for the understanding of workers' reactions during the privatisation of housing and of social services, as the next chapters will show.

'Everybody agreed that actually all the machinery, this factory is simply our property, only, formally speaking it does not meet, let say... this property wasn't really controlled by the employees. It was real property but the right to conduct, to rule this property was usurped by a narrow élite. Workers didn't want to agree with this situation.' (Bakuniak 1983b: 316)

Krzemiński's work not only confirms the appropriateness of a class analysis for 1980-81 Solidarity. It also offers some pointers for the understanding of the following phase of class disintegration, showing how, after Jaruzelski's coup, work was suddenly strongly devalued in workers' eyes, and consequently how identification in the factory and in the working group declined (Krzemiński 1997: 238). Similarly, Staniszkis (1991) detected among the strikers of 1988-89 a new, 'post-modern' mentality. Its main features were a disbelief in progress, an uncertainty about one's identity, and a conception of action as an independent value. All those points correspond to a disintegration of the I-O-T principles of class consciousness. As a consequence, work conflict also started to be expressed in individualistic, non-class forms like absenteeism, lack of discipline, and low quality work (Pańków 1990; Kubik 1991).

A study of the strikes

Equally important are the findings of another investigation by the Polish Sociological Association in 1980-81 and also unpublished until democratisation (Kulpińska 1990). In particular, I shall consider the analysis carried out on the strikes in the Warsaw region in the summer of 1980 (Drażkiewicz and Rychard 1980).

Kulpińska's team, unlike Krzemiński's, explicitly uses a class terminology, and in a way turns it against the socialist state. This might have a rhetorical nature (although published in 1990, the texts date back to the '80s and were not revisited

after 1989), consisting in appropriating the regime's ideology as a justification scheme. This scheme has been followed by many internal opponents of state socialism during the century, the best example being perhaps the Chinese students singing the *Internationale* on Tian An Men Square in 1989. In any case, what is here interesting is the empirical grounding of Kulpińska *et als*' statements.

The Polish sociologists adopt an actor-centred interpretative scheme that recalls Touraine's standpoint. The main task in the analysis of the strikes is then the definition of the conflicting sides.

On the strikers' side, are found first of all the direct production workers. The first workshops to go on strike are the production and some auxiliary workshops (like the power shop, the toolroom, maintenance), and the most active are blue-collar workers. The technicians rarely go on strike, and the administrative workers almost never.

More complex is the picture of the 'other side of the barricade'. There are multiple criteria for its identification: the research team investigated who fought the strikers, who was seen by the strikers as 'the other side' (e.g., to whom demands were addressed), and who took part in the negotiations. In this way, the ranks of the adversaries were quite large. At the plant level, they comprised the foremen, the workshop directors, the secretaries and the activists of the plant party organisations. Beyond the plant level, new opponents were met: party officers, local authorities, government authorities. With some exceptions, the official unions also were an enemy (at *Huta Warszawa* for instance they officially condemned the strike). In some cases, at the end of the negotiations the official unions' representatives signed the agreement as part of the same side as the director and the party representatives.

The sociological assessment of this empirical investigation of the strikes in Warsaw reads precisely like support for the 'class' interpretation.

What is very typical of the social composition of the strike-opposing side, is that it starts at a relatively low level of the organisational hierarchy. Even the foremen are members of this group: they actively take part in the conflict by soliciting the workers to go back to work and to cease the strike. Hence the border is located where the productive functions terminate, and the control functions start. In the debate on whether foremen are still part of the working class, which exists in the sociology of work and of organisation, the strikes in Warsaw in 1980 offered quite a clear answer. It is notable that the strikers were almost exclusively common workers, that is people devoid of any influence on economic decisions. Against them stood their immediate superiors. The behaviour of lower management, e.g. of the foremen, shows

that their role in the system goes beyond the normal organisational functions originating in the requirements of work organisation. They are a sort of outpost of the proprietors of economy, placed on the frontier (or rather at the lower border of the social structure) as representatives of the ruling élite, which defends its power monopoly even at this lowest level (...). On them is built the entire structure of privileges and influence of the other social categories constituting this group – or perhaps even this class. (Drażkiewicz and Rychard 1980: 14-15)

A collection of life-stories

Marek Latoszek with his Gdańsk's colleagues produced quite a different piece of research. They collected in 1981, through an open contest, 201 diaries by people either taking part or closely observing the strikes on the Polish Littoral (especially in the shipyards of Gdańsk, Gdynia and Stettin) in August 1980. They subsequently analysed in depth the 36 most interesting diaries. With this method, which in Poland has a famous precedent and model (Thomas and Znaniecki 1927), they offered a point of view 'from below' on events that have been widely accounted for 'from above'. As with Krzemiński's and Kulpińska's work, the publication of the results was prohibited after Jaruzelski's 'putsch'. They were printed in an edition of one hundred copies as a methodological study in 1987, and finally published in 1991 (Latoszek 1991).

Concentrating as it does on a very limited period of time, and above all on a clearly 'exceptional' situation, Latoszek's materials leave less room for speculation on workers' consciousness than the previously mentioned works. In fact, one of the most interesting arguments is about the shift from a 'workers' movement' to a 'social movement' identity, due to exchange with people outside the plants. These people 'beyond the gates', for their part, were in no doubt about the 'leading role' of the workers. Some other points are worth mentioning.

First, Latoszek – along with many others – stresses the role of conflict in the construction of a collective identity.

The working class goes through an accelerated process of becoming a political subject; its members become conscious of their position, role, and chances, they organise themselves, they start fighting. (Latoszek 1991: 292)

The strike initiative, consistent with Krzemiński's account and with the argument on the basically 'worker' nature of Solidarity, came from the workers subject to the heaviest work conditions in the big factories.

The strike started from workshops such as the hull-shop and the toolroom, where the work conditions were the heaviest; by contrast, the engine workshops were considered a sort of workers' aristocracy. (296)

Yet the most important point is the presence of a work conflict with the lower hierarchy.

The attempts made by directors and foremen to organise work during the strike met the immediate counteraction of the strikers. (297)

Surveys and text analyses

Besides Touraine's, Krzemiński's, and Kulpińska's research, there has been other precious, although methodologically different, sociological research on the early Solidarity. Two works in particular allow a general theoretical discussion. The first one is a nation-wide survey carried out on an all-Polish representative sample in 1981, once again censored by the regime and published only recently (Adamski 1996). Its conclusions conflict with the hypothesis of the class nature of Solidarity: the author suggests that the most important divide in Poland was not between interest groups, but between society and power. However, the survey was not concerned with work-related matters, with the exception of the question: 'which are the most important problems to be solved in the company?'. Answering to this question, Solidarity members mentioned, in order: (Adamski 1996: 23)

- 1) tools, raw materials, energy, work organisation (21.9%)
- 2) economic reform (10.4%)
- 3) salaries (10.4%)
- 4) participation in the management (7.5%)
- 5) work conditions, security and hygiene (7.2%)
- 6) social conditions (6%)
- 7) modernisation (5.1%)
- 8) bad relations (4.9%)
- 9) work discipline and productivity (3.1%)
- 10) others (23.5%).

From such data, it is impossible to infer anything about the class or non-class orientations of Solidarity. The only indication the survey can give on this question (and which will be important in Chapter 4), is that in 1981 financial issues were not expressed as a central concern by Solidarity members.

The second sociological interpretation is based on an extensive analysis of Solidarity publications at the local and national level, reinforced by a personal observation of the events (Kowalski 1990). A first version was published in 1988 by Warsaw University in only one hundred exemplars. A 'publication' in the real sense of the word had to wait until 1990.

From the point of view of sociological theory, Kowalski's analysis is the most elaborate among those mentioned here. Unfortunately, Kowalski does not include in the analysis workplace bulletins. As a result, the political and cultural issues are pushed in the foreground, while the problems at work receive less attention than in any other of the mentioned analyses. However, at a certain point the issue of 'who done Solidarity' is considered. In this regard, Kowalski's sources, even though indirectly, show that the workers used (also) class arguments in the defence of their decisional power in the union.

'Without the intellectuals, I wouldn't manage anything in the *Huta*... But the decisions should be taken by the workers. They are more numerous. They have a stronger pressure force, and in spite of all they are the most responsible people. They don't sit behind single desks'. [from *Głos Wolny*, bulletin of the first Solidarity Congress] (Kowalski 1990: 111)

'In many conversations I had with workers from big industrial factories in various regions of Poland, they repeated that the creative intellectuals and the white-collar workers should have the function of counsellors and experts, and not of decision-makers (...) [because] the workers as a class are more decided (...); after the dolorous experiences of '56, '70, '76, and '80, the Polish working class has no longer doubts on the nature of power in Poland, whose non-working class nature is evident'. [from *Jedność*, bulletin of Western Pomerania Solidarity] (*ibidem*)

However, neither Adamski or Kowalski are in a position, through their data, to clarify Solidarity's role at work. Oral-sources-based research has been more useful, although this also was not concentrated on the work situation. The next chapters, through the analysis of the union discourse in the '90s, will try, joining a historical perspective with the sociological one, to add some points to this still open issue.

A provisory conclusion is possible. The relative unpopularity of the class concept as regards Solidarity, especially among Polish scholars, seems very understandable on the basis of their opposition to the communist system. It has emerged that the Polish members of Touraine's team in 1981 initially expressed some scepticism towards the vocabulary of French sociology, which was much too 'Marxist' in their eyes (Frybes and Kuczyński 1994). This kind of cultural resistance,

because of its sociologically ideological nature, was naturally more prevalent among researchers than among workers. The fact that, despite the cultural resistance of the analysts, so many indicators of class consciousness appear in the findings of Krzemiński's team, should be treated as strengthening the evidence.

¹ A rare example of the pure transition paradigm is to be found in a book by Leszek Balcerowicz (1995), Polish economist and Finance Minister, in which the word 'transition' is continuously used.

² In 1997 a Polish journalist opened an interview with me with the question: 'what differentiates the Polish trade unions from the normal ones, like the Italian?' (*Gazeta Wyborcza*, 27.9.97). The shortcoming of this way of thinking – evident to an Italian not used to seeing his country defined as normal – lies in neglecting the actual Western reality, subordinated to a mythic image of normality.

³ It seems even less coincidental that the countries which implemented Sachs' receipts of liberalisation and privatisation most quickly and literally (Albania and Russia), are also the less successful, whereas the slowest one (China) is doing very well (whatever we think of its political regime).

⁴ There is a contradiction inherent in these views which remains unexplained. If communist Europe was radically different because of a lack of interest differentiation (as they argue), why then should the post-communist mentality be characterised by an orientation to conflict?

⁵ Tonino Perna, a sociologist of the economy working in the field in Albania, formulated the opinion in Spring 1997 that Berisha's country was anticipating global trends (Perna 1997). At that time it may have appeared to be a provocative idea, but much less after the global financial turmoil of the following months (Perna 1998). A similar point, but from the different theoretical perspective of 'demodernization', is made in another sociological study of Albania (Romano 1997), according to which the same general processes which occur in the West also occur in that country, but in a purer and wider way. The case of the country of the eagles will be mentioned again in the text as an extreme, pure case of a totalitarian past followed by an abrupt transition.

⁶ I call neo-corporatism what Philippe Schmitter calls corporatism *tout court*, the distinction being necessary when dealing with the Italian case where corporatism has particular historical connotations. I recall here for the sake of clarity the classic definition by Schmitter:

Corporatism can be defined as a system of interest representation in which the constituent units are organized into a limited number of singular, compulsory, noncompetitive, hierarchically ordered and functionally differentiated categories, recognized or licensed (if not created) by the state and granted a deliberate representational monopoly within their respective categories in exchange for observing certain controls on their selection of leaders and articulation of demands and supports. (Schmitter 1974: 93-94)

⁷ Jadwiga Staniszkis (leading sociologist, advisor to Solidarity, and perhaps the most coherent advocate of corporatism in Eastern Europe) expressed her disappointment to me during a personal conversation already in early 1998 (few months after the electoral victory of Solidarity, advised by Staniszkis).

⁸ Culturalist and anthropological post-communist studies can be considered, instead of as a field of inquiry, as objects of analysis in themselves. The abuse of cultural and anthropological explanations seems to be further evidence of a socially constructed dualism between East and West, since these 'anthropological' tools are used only for the supposedly backward Eastern societies. The most striking example are perhaps the parallel centrifugal processes in the former Yugoslavia and Italy. In the former country events are seen through an anthropological lens which emphasises an innate Balkan barbarism and occludes any economic, social or political factors. In Italy, by contrast, everything is explained on an economic, rational basis with total disregard for the cultural and anthropological factors. By contrast, in this piece of research I shall attempt to use the same method and the same interpretative scheme in both the East and the West.

⁹ A discussion and assessment of the tradition of comparative studies on class and work would require a separate thesis. In any case, the statement on British-French similarities is justified only if one considers work conflict as a central issue for the development of a broader consciousness. In this case British trade unions are class actors, according to the historians' judgement that 'no other working class has so tenaciously or successfully elevated the phenomenon of workplace resistance to a central feature of the relations with the wider society' (Price 1983: 58). As regards sociologists' judgements, the important but ambivalent findings by Gallie (1978; 1983) have been discussed in the previous chapter. The later conclusions by Rose (1987: 188) seem the best assessment of the issue:

[There exists] a very keen perception that economic life as a whole, and work organisations more particularly, are characterised by very sharp divisions of interest, reward, power and status between ordinary employees, especially blue-collar workers, and administrative, professional or proprietor groups who plan, or direct, or control the work effort of other employees. If, for the greater part, British enterprise level representatives did not possess a 'developed' or radical class consciousness (...) nearly all of them did exhibit a most sensitive and highly developed 'conflict consciousness'. (188)

¹⁰ Also for this reason, theorists taking a materialist approach to the study of industrial relations but not concerned with external issues avoid defining themselves as Marxists (e.g. Edwards 1986).

¹¹ Recently, some authors have even argued that the 'A' element precludes, instead of contributing to, class consciousness. Accordingly, class consciousness would develop only when labour gives up any illusions about changing capitalism and devotes its efforts to getting a better deal within it (Hattam 1993). Seen in this way, business unionism would not conflict with class consciousness.

¹² This part of Berger's and Luckmann's thought allows to reject Szokolczai's (1996) opinion that phenomenological sociology would be unsuitable in a period of deep change.

¹³ In a way this distinction is similar to that proposed by Freeman and Medoff (1984) between 'voice' and 'monopoly' as trade union functions. Freeman and Medoff gave strong value judgements, while the problem here is, more than which function is better, which one is appropriate to specific historical situations.

¹⁴ Moreover, the Polish situation will put itself in-between those of Piombino (almost pure market) and Turin (almost pure class). In this way we will see that much more than formal ownership relations, local social construction is important in giving meaning to social relations and social action.

¹⁵ In a study on class stratification, an approach very far from that followed here, Evans (1996) makes an important remark when he notices that, in surveys, the concept of class is clearly meaningful to Eastern Europeans.

¹⁶ Some authors, somewhat prematurely, detected an increasing importance of class cleavage in politics in Hungary and Poland after the end of communism (Szelényi, Fodor and Hanley 1997). However, their findings allow us only to speak of the influence of class on party choice: class issues have become central issues neither in Polish nor in Hungarian political debates. In my terms, this means that there might be an increasing impact of *interests* on politics, but not an appearance of classes as actors. Moreover, these analyses consider only the period until 1994. The Polish elections of 1995 and 1997 seem to contradict their conclusions.

¹⁷ From a less orthodox Marxist standpoint it is possible to state that the Soviet system was a 'sub-group' within the societal type of capitalism (Chavance 1995). Three arguments support this statement. Under state socialism, as well as under capitalism, firstly production was mediated by monetary exchange and a wage-labour system; secondly, co-ordination was achieved through both hierarchies and markets; finally, the division of labour was co-ordinated in despotic forms within the enterprise (technical division of labour) and through exchange within society (social division of labour).

¹⁸ The research was repeated in 1994-96, offering a unique comparison over time (Consoli, Ishikawa, Makó and Martin 1998). In both phases the surveys concentrated on the electric and electronic machine industry.

¹⁹ A 1981 survey (Adamski 1996), although it almost certainly overestimates the overall Solidarity figures, gives some indication on the social composition of the union. Solidarity was joined by 86.7% of the skilled workers from heavy industry, 74.1% of the skilled workers from light industry, 73.5% of foremen, 69% of technicians, 51.7% of administrative employees, 51.7% of high-level

administrators. Unfortunately, Adamski merges the categories 'unskilled workers' and 'agriculture dependent manual workers', so that the overall figure for both groups (55.4%) is absolutely meaningless. In this regard it must be recalled, however, that for political rather than organisational reasons in the communist states unskilled industrial workers were officially not numerous.

²⁰ I am extremely grateful to the authors of that investigation (and in particular to Michel Wieviorka who in addition placed his office at my disposal) for the unlimited access to the research materials.

²¹ On the method of 'sociological intervention', see Touraine (1978) and Dubet and Wieviorka (1996).

²² This version is also used as a source, though with different theoretical goals, by Kubik (1994a).

²³ The interviewee uses the term (popular in Polish) *człowiek*, that is 'human being'. It has a strong moral and, in this theoretical perspective, 'subjective' connotation. English lacks a precise equivalent.

²⁴ The functionalist approach has been applied to Eastern Europe starting with Parsons and finishing with many *ex-post* analyses of the breakdown of the Soviet Union. It seems however the least suitable approach to the understanding of Solidarity. Even if many analysts do not agree with the class interpretation, to my knowledge nobody has dared to explain that movement as a simple reaction to a crisis or to some system disfunction. By contrast, both class- and Weber-like analyses agree on a much more deeply rooted subjectivity.

CHAPTER 3

THE DISINTEGRATION OF CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS, OR THE PARADOXICAL PARALLELISM OF EAST AND WEST

*A blue-collar worker to his mate:
'La lotta di classe è finita, Cippiuti'.
'Bisogna andare a dircelo all'Agnelli, che non vada avanti da
solo all'insaputa di tutto'.^{*}
(A cartoon by Altan)*

1. The field of inquiry

1.1. The choice of cases

The inquiry was concentrated on a two-by-two case comparison. The cases considered were the Fiat car factories in Turin and in Southern Poland, with a particular emphasis on the assembly line workshops, and the Lucchini Group steelworks in Piombino and Warsaw.

The main criterion in the selection of the cases, trade unions, and people, was 'theoretical relevance' as defined by 'grounded theory' (Glaser and Strauss 1967: 49). Accordingly, the actual research strategy has been adapted in the course of the inquiry. Four main changes took place.

In the case of the Fiat factories, the investigation became a secondary two-by-two comparison since two plants in each country were considered (Mirafiori and Rivalta in Italy, Bielsko-Biala and Tychy in Poland). In the framework of a 'disintegration' hypothesis, it seemed useful to investigate not only the extent to which one can speak of 'national patterns', but also of 'company patterns' in industrial relations. The idea that firms' behaviour affects work relations more than states' behaviour is becoming increasingly widespread (see for instance Katz 1993;

^{*} 'The class struggle has come to an end, Cippiuti'. 'We must inform Agnelli, so that he doesn't go on unaware of all this'.

Marginson *et al.* 1988; Müller and Purcell 1992), and should therefore be tested. The Fiat case, even if not representative, strongly suggests that in industrial relations there has indeed recently been a strong tendency to focus on the enterprise (Crouch 1993; Kochan, Locke and Piore 1995). Nevertheless, firm-level strategy and culture, albeit very important factors, are not the sole determinants: divergence also occurs nowadays *within* companies across different plants (MacDuffie and Pil 1997). The differences found between the Tychy and the Bielsko-Biala plants, as well as between Rivalta and Mirafiori, are almost as striking as the cross-national differences. The case of Turin is the most telling. The Rivalta and Mirafiori plants are only about ten km from each other. Moreover, the workforce is demographically homogeneous. Today production is different (it is more quality-oriented in Rivalta than in Mirafiori), but this is a recent development which is a *consequence* of the plants' differences and not a *cause* of them. Therefore, the analysis of these cases offers good arguments for the assumption (expressed in the theoretical framework sketched in chapter 2) that union action is *socially constructed* in the micro-sociological experience of work more than it is *socially determined* by some order of 'macro' factors. The six plants of Fiat and the Lucchini group have remained the principal case studies, and their main characteristics are given in Table 1.

Besides dividing the Fiat case into a two-by-two comparison, a second change in the research strategy was the addition of a number of control cases to assess the representativeness of the findings. The main risk of bias is the nationality of ownership asset of the plants studied: Fiat and Lucchini are foreign employers for the Poles, and 'national' for the Italians, therefore they may be differently perceived. Moreover, it is commonly believed that Italian companies have a distinctive management style that strongly affects work relations. In fact, there are good grounds to consider Fiat Auto and Lucchini Group as typical cases of a paternalistic and anti-unions family capitalism, which is rare outside Italy.¹ However, the pressures of globalization and the scale of their activities are gradually forcing these companies to adopt more mainstream management styles. In the case of Fiat this change became evident with the Agnelli and Romiti succession in the mid-90s, but had in fact already started few years earlier with the re-orientation of production towards quality and the

organisational project *Fabbrica Integrata*. In order to assess this issue, a non-Italian case (the French Danone company, and in particular the plants in Casale Cremasco, Warsaw and Bieruń Stary) was added, in which a smaller number of interviews helped to assess the 'disturbance effect' of the nationality of capital. Danone is not a secondary case. It is the leading group in food production in Italy, and its presence in Eastern Europe (besides Poland it also has plants in Russia, Czech Republic, Hungary, and Bulgaria) is consolidated and often dominant not only in retailing but also in production.

Table 1 - Plants and trade unions

| Plant | Approximate workforce at the time of the investigation | Trade unions present and approximate membership (*object of investigation) |
|--------------------|--|---|
| Fiat Rivalta | 7,000 | Fiom (20%)* Fim (5%)* Uilm (5%)* Fismic (10%)* Sin-Cobas (1%)* Ugl (1%)* |
| Fiat Mirafiori | 29,000 | Fiom (10%)* Fim (5%)* Uilm (5%)* Fismic (10%)* Sin-Cobas (2%)* Ugl (1%)* Cisal (1%)* |
| Fiat Bielsko-Biala | 6,000 | Solidarność (25%)* Metalowcy (15%)* Solidarity 80 (3%)* Sierpień 80 (1%)* Engineers and Technicians' T.U. (1%)* |
| Fiat Tychy | 6,000 | Sierpień 80 (30%)* Metalowcy (16%)* Popieluszko (8%)* Federacja (3%)* Engineers and Technicians' T.U. (1%)* |
| Lucchini Piombino | 2,500 | Fiom (50%)* Fim (10%)* Uilm (15%)* Sin-Cobas (5%)* |
| Lucchini Warsaw | 2,500 | Solidarity (65%)* Hutnicy (10%)* |

Thirdly, the very diverse and changing Polish situation required a broader look. Therefore a more superficial collection of information on trade union activity (but also a few open interviews) was carried out in a number of other firms in different sectors and having different capital assets. These observations were not made on a comparative basis, as no comparable situations could be found in Italy. The rationale lies in the need to gather more information about an emerging (and therefore

still little known) national system like the Polish one: for this reason, the generalisation of the findings is more delicate in Poland than in Italy. This does not mean that Fiat and Lucchini represent (or anticipate the developments of) the Italian system. Nevertheless, their great significance is universally acknowledged in that all the national actors consider them (especially Fiat) reference-points.² In Poland, it was convenient also to consider other companies: the Ursus tractor plants in Warsaw and Lublin (state-owned), the Daewoo car factory in Warsaw, and a few industrial companies in Płock in Central Poland (Petrochemia Płock, New Holland, Cotex).

A final, smaller 'deviation' from the original plan occurred in Piombino. One of the main current transformations of industry is externalisation or 'outsourcing', that is the contracting out of some activities previously integrated in industrial concerns. This process is taking place in all six plants. In Turin it has already become a topic for research and political debate, especially during the successful '*bisarche*' (trucks) strike of 1996 and the contracting out of internal transport to the multinational company TNT in 1998. Its effects are most striking in the Piombino steelworks, and for this reason I also interviewed some union activists from a contractor firm (Siderco). The rationale was a need to understand the process of 'dualisation' arising *within* the plants in order to conceptualise better the 'dualisation' *among* plants.

1.2. Introduction to the plants

1.2.1. An alternative classification

This would seem to be an appropriate point at which to classify the plants described in the research. If the internal history and social environment of the plants rather than their external characteristics (location, property assets etc.) are considered, it is possible to classify the six companies used in this research according to their 'crystallised' type of union consciousness (Table 2). The different types depend on the different sets of experiences significant for the trade unions: work relations, political struggle, and local community.

This classification is far from exhaustive in its account of the features of trade union activity. There are, of course, internal differences within the plants, and other inter-plant similarities and parallelisms in some respects. Nevertheless, this

'alternative' typology based on the plant histories, with their sets of experiences and belief-systems, is no less significant than a national or company-based typology (a Poland-Italy distinction or a Lucchini-Fiat one). Therefore, I shall give here a preliminary explanation of these 'consciousness types', which will be useful in the next sections and chapters.

Table 2

| Type of consciousness | Italy | Poland |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| -class/politics oriented | Fiat Mirafiori | Huta Lucchini-Warszawa |
| -class/work relations oriented | Fiat Rivalta | Fiat Tychy |
| -communitarian/labour-market oriented | Lucchini Siderurgica Piombino | Fiat Bielsko-Biala |

Trade unions, as has been pointed out by a number of scholars including Marx, operate in two different areas. The first is the labour market, with its employment opportunities. In this area unions aim to reduce competition among workers in order to achieve better conditions. This side of union action, which was best formulated by the Webbs in England, is a pure case of instrumental collectivism. Moreover, it has often been found to demonstrate discriminatory attitudes towards some segments of the workforce (e.g. women, foreigners, or the less educated...). Therefore it develops best in stable communities, where both economic structure and the social composition of the population are under tighter control.

The other side of trade union action develops *within* the workplace, and it deals with work conflict as defined in the previous chapter. This is the side that has to do with 'class', and with an alternative view of how industrial production should be. It is necessarily collectivist, but also intrinsically concerned with the individual needs of the man (and potentially of the woman) at work. A further distinction can, however, be made: the working class, as the bearer of a positive idea of industry and of an alternative view of its organisation, always has a general political relevance, but only in some situations does it undertake political action in the strictest sense.

The limited scope of this inquiry is to analyse the transformation of union consciousness in a period of universally acknowledged decline of the labour

movement. In this context, it should be checked whether a tradition of 'class' consciousness and political involvement does matter in the present.

Why are the six plants distinguished in this way? Each one must be described in more detail.

1.2.2. The Italian plants

Fiat Mirafiori

Fiat is the seventh largest car producer in the world, and in 1990 had a group turn-over of Lit. 64,000 billion. The Mirafiori plant in Turin, built in 1939 on Mussolini's prompting to be the biggest factory in the world, has in the past employed up to 52,500 people.³ Together with the other Fiat factory in Turin, the *Lingotto*, it bestowed on Turin the character of a 'company-town', and it became the object of several sociological studies (Bagnasco 1986 and 1990; Bottighieri and Ceri 1987; Barbano 1992). Mirafiori was a momentous example of the Taylorist conception of industrial organisation; that is, of the kind of industrial organisation considered by leading French sociologists of work (Friedmann and Touraine) as the most suitable situation for the development of class conflict and class consciousness. Moreover, at Fiat for a long time industrial relations have been a strategically vital area: unlike in most other similar companies, they have been dealt with by managers at the very top of the hierarchy.

In the '50s, industrial relations at Fiat were managed in an extremely unilateral way. In particular, the left-wing union Fiom was firmly isolated and combated.⁴ The massive flow of unskilled workers from Southern Italy which had its peak at the beginning of the '60s was followed by a difficult process of integration between the new 'proletarian' mass and the local skilled workforce. This eventually resulted, in 1969, in the so-called *autunno caldo* ('hot autumn'), a very turbulent period of workers' action. During and after the *autunno caldo*, the labour movement managed to attain a real 'counter-power' in the workshops, and rarely if ever have job control issues become so important. The unions, and notably the Cgil militants, had at that time an almost epic vision of workers' managerial capacities (Manghi 1987).⁵

Because of its size and location, as well as the history of the Turin working class rooted in Gramsci's *consigli*, Mirafiori was not just any work setting. It was also a political symbol. In the '70s, it was frequently said that 'governments are made in Rome, but unmade in Mirafiori'. Even now, when economic or social issues are in the headlines, Italian journalists go to the Mirafiori gates to ask the opinion of the 'Italian Worker'. As a consequence, the experience of the Mirafiori metalworker was two-edged. (S)he experienced both a situation of conflict in the workplace and a situation of political centrality. Since the '60s Mirafiori has been the favourite hunting ground for extra-parliamentary left-wing groups, including the terrorist organisations which emerged from the disintegration of the *autunno caldo* (on the relationship between the labour movement and terrorism, with references to the Turin case, see Wiewiorka 1988). October 1980, with the defeat of the Mirafiori trade unions after a 35-day strike, is seen in Italy as the end of the long Italian *anni caldi*.⁶

Nowadays, Mirafiori employs 'only' 29,000 workers (including the 2,000 'sold' to TNT in 1998). In the '90s there was a new process of rationalisation at Fiat which has yet to be concluded: two plants in Northern Italy (Desio and Chivasso) were closed and both Rivalta and Mirafiori underwent further cut-back. The most important reduction at Mirafiori, in 1994, gave birth to a resurgence of union conflict, for the first time also involving white-collar employees, previously almost by definition loyal towards the employer and hostile to the unions. As a consequence, the workforce is today quite old (the average age being around 48) and the education level has remained very low (not more than five years for half of the manual workers).

Change was not only quantitative, however. In the '80s production was substantially automated (Becchi Collidà and Negrelli 1986; Santielli 1987; Lerner 1988; Locke and Negrelli 1989; Locke 1992), and in the '90s the 'Japanese' concepts of lean production and total quality were introduced (Bonazzi 1993, 1994, 1997 and 1998; Cerruti and Rieser 1991; Rieser 1992 and 1996; Così 1993; Carrieri 1993; Pessa and Sartirano 1993; Camuffo and Volpato 1995; Camuffo and Micelli 1998). Management claimed to be shifting towards more participatory Human Resource Management approaches, but the effects of the implementation of this change⁷ are not

always obvious in the older sites, although they are impressive in the new green-field plant in Melfi, in Southern Italy (Rieser 1997; Pero 1998).

Trade unions are now much weaker than in the past, with a unionisation rate below 20% and successful strikes rare. *Cobas* is present and active as well as the 'traditional' *Fiom*, *Fim* and *Uilm*. As in the other Italian Fiat plants, there is a company-based union, the *Fismic*, the heir of the so-called 'yellow union' *Sida*, created by Fiat in the '50s. Today *Fismic* is also present in other factories (more or less linked to the Fiat group) and though promoting participation rejects any charge of collaboration. However, since it is traditionally considered extraneous to the labour movement, it will not be an object of this study. The same can be said about the last two, very small, unions active at Fiat: the autonomous *Cisal* and the right-wing *Ugl*.⁸

In conclusion, the Mirafiori plant represents a suitable case for investigating the transformation of a working class undergoing both change at work and a political decline. Because of its complexity, political involvement and de-unionisation, it might be caricatured as 'the French pattern'.

Fiat Rivalta

The Rivalta factory, located a few kilometres South of Turin, is younger and smaller than Mirafiori: it was established in 1967 and today employs 7,000 workers (peak employment having been 15,000). As a consequence, Rivalta does not have the symbolic significance of Mirafiori. Trade unions have concentrated much more on work conflict, and have been less affected by the loss of political centrality. This does not, however, mean that political commitment was weaker: in fact, the *PCI* and *Cgil* were more influential than in Mirafiori. For example, *Cobas*, which is very active in Mirafiori, is absent in Rivalta. However, the local communist subculture has been very pragmatic and has clearly distinguished political issues from work issues. Moreover, unlike the usual 'Latin' model, the union was perceived as having priority over the party. Speaking on this point, the workers interviewed in my inquiry reported that the *PCI* was the transmission belt for the union, and not the opposite. The enduring vitality of this union subculture is visible in the magazine published by the local *Fiom*, '*Spray*', which does not have an equivalent in Mirafiori or in any other plant in this study.

Currently the trade unions (especially Fiom) are stronger than in Mirafiori and the membership rate is almost 40%.⁹ Moreover, the unions still exert active influence and control over work matters, and have developed a proper approach of 'participation through conflict' (see as an illustration Pessa and Sartirano 1993). During the implementation of the Lancia K assembly line, almost daily stoppages forced the directors to accept suggestions by the unions. This case could therefore be represented as a kind of 'German' *Konfliktpartnerschaft*, presenting both workers' institutionalised sub-cultures and *Mitbestimmung* practices.

Lusid Piombino

The Lucchini steelworks (earlier AFP, today officially 'Lusid') in Piombino have a completely different history. The small town of Piombino (50,000 inhabitants) has since prehistory been linked to iron ore deposits. The steel industry developed early (compared to the Italian industrial development more generally) and rapidly at the end of the XIX Century. In 1905, 70% of the active population worked in heavy industry. The strong local trade unions attained improvements in working conditions and contractual terms (e.g. the 8-hour working day, housing subsidies, job safety regulations...) earlier than in the rest of the country (Carignoni, Luchetti and Poli 1985; Favilli 1974; Banconi 1970; Cresti and Orefice 1990). Under the fascist regime, however, the biggest steelworks 'AFP' (*Acciaierie e Ferriere di Piombino*), then belonging to the ILVA holding, developed differently from the global steel industry. 'Taylorist' organisation principles, which had been introduced in the United States in the '20s, did not find any implementation in AFP. More distinctively, the majority of the workforce was engaged in directly productive tasks, and discipline was achieved through a kind of 'military control' (Amatori 1992).

Towards the end of World War II the Piombino steelworks, together with the harbour and a large part of the town, were destroyed by the retreating German Army. The plants were readily and spontaneously reconstructed by the population, and taken under their control by mass organisations (Left parties, trade unions and anti-Fascist resistance groups). This event, still alive in the memory of the inhabitants of Piombino, is emblematic of the symbiosis between the town and the steelworks. The ILVA industrial group, including the Piombino plant, was subsequently nationalised.

For a long time the governance of AFP, and to some extent all of the town, remained a political issue. This involved the City Council – after 1945 dominated by the PCI, then the PDS –, national government, and the trade unions. Piombino was for a long time an area of full employment, where the recruitment was tightly controlled by the trade unions.

Because of the industrial structure, there was also a typically male dominated economy. In 1981 the employment rate was 98% for men aged 30-54, and 32% for women of the same age; moreover, 51% of men, and only 12% of women, worked in industry (CLES 1988). Even more significant than the employment data is the fact that a timid attempt made by the AFP unions in the '80s to employ a group of women in production failed miserably. 23 women out of 25 resigned or moved to the offices after a few months, and as acknowledged by union leaders themselves this happened because of the 'male' culture dominating the workshops. Neither the unions nor the employer have ever dared to repeat the experiment.

At the political level, the Piombino workers' community took the form of a communist subculture, deeply rooted in the factories (Favilli and Tognarini 1994). After 1946 electoral support for the PCI was massive, never below 50% until its dissolution (1991). The PCI had a virtual monopoly of workers' representation, since the extreme-left parties scored below the national average (Comune di Piombino 1987). This hegemony also the cultural level: almost all the literature on Piombino reflects that culture.

This strongly integrated and uniform steelworkers' community started to be seriously undermined during the '80s. The crisis of the steel sector, which in Europe between 1975 and 1992 lost 52% of its workers and saw the virtual closure of entire districts, also affected Piombino. The number of workers employed in the various steelworks dropped from about 15,000 in the early '80s to less than 5,000 in the mid-'90s. AFP has been continuously declining, from 8,000 in the early '80s to 2,500 in 1997 (when the interviews were collected) and 2,100 in 1998. Most important, the plant was privatised (like the majority of the Italian steel sector in the period) and taken over at the end of 1992 by the Lucchini group. This is a family-owned holding with an 80-year history in steel production, and a turn-over in 1997 of Lit. 3,000

billion. It is based in Northern Italy but is already considerably internationalised with plants in France and Germany. However, AFP is the largest plant in the group and the only one with an integral production cycle. Lucchini (who was president of the Italian employers' confederation in the '80s) is well known for a determined opposition against trade unions' involvement in management decisions. This characteristic was very clear in the style adopted by Lucchini to introduce organisational change in the '80s, a style very different from the 'participatory' one of other Italian (private or state-owned) companies of the steel sector (De Luca 1992).

Privatisation provoked a long conflict, with a 38-day strike and the suspension of production (which is a serious occurrence in a plant with blast-furnaces). The trade unions aimed to keep all the guarantees they had in the state sector, and possibly to avoid privatisation altogether. The strike was unsuccessful and 600 workers (among whom were a large number of union activists) were made redundant. However, the state-inherited pay system was maintained. Thanks to massive state subsidies and a working time reduction (to 28 hours a week) through the *contratti di solidarietà* (job-security agreements) all workers either moved to early retirement, or re-entered the factory after a few years.

In 1995 (during a boom in the steel sector) 500 young workers were recruited but with new, much worse terms of employment, provoking a deep generational conflict.¹⁰ In 1997-98, a new restructuring involved the redundancy of another 350 workers and revealed the weak position of the formerly very strong unions, whose resistance was unsuccessful. In summer 1998 there was a modest recovery, with the satisfactory negotiation of a modernisation plan, but this proved to be illusory. In the autumn the conflict exploded again leading (for the first time since the war) to the closure of the plant for two weeks, something which was perceived by the unions as a lock-out.

Industrial relations, then, have taken a variable course, but have remained better than in the other Lucchini-owned steelworks in Piombino, *La Magona d'Italia*. In Piombino the trade unions were for many years considered very strong. As mentioned, they were characterised by the dominance of the PCI: in the mid-70s about 70% of the AFP workers were members of the PCI, whose plant branch in turn had a

dominating influence on the trade union. Since the '80s the role of the PCI, and then the PDS, has rapidly declined, and today neither the PDS nor *Rifondazione Comunista* have a plant branch. Nevertheless the trade unions maintain a very high membership (80%), although the historic *Fiom* hegemony has been undermined by the rise of *Cobas*.¹¹ In spite of the high membership, in the ballot on the restructuring agreement of February 1998 there was a surprising 49.4% against, which suggest widespread discontent with union representation.

The Lucchini plant thus represents a typical case of a besieged industrial workers' community. The ecological issues are emblematic; these currently oppose large segments of the workforce to the town population, which no longer depends on the factory and has therefore stopped passively enduring the pollution. Interestingly enough, the agreement on reclamation reached at the end of 1998, after a long conflict, between company and local authorities was not signed by the trade unions because work problems were not solved in parallel.¹²

The main concern of the unions, tied to local political power, has always been the control of employment. The rapid increase of unemployment (17% in 1997) and the differentiation of demand and supply on the local labour market is the main source of problems for them. The 'local' factor is important for unions' identity, as shown by the fears of transfers of production to other plants in the Lucchini Group. This case could be labelled 'Belgian'.

1.2.3. The Polish plants

Huta Lucchini Warszawa

The recent history of the Warsaw Lucchini steelworks (*Huta Lucchini-Warszawa*) displays some striking similarities with the Piombino case. First of all, the number of workers employed declined from almost 10,000 in the '80s to about 4,600 at the moment of privatisation and below 2,000 at the end of the '90s, and as a result the average age is high (46-47 years). Although the decline was more rapid and paradoxically less disputed in Warsaw, the numerical similarity with Piombino is strong, and representative of what has been happening in the steel industry in Europe in the last 20 years. A more notable parallel is the privatisation process. Both

companies were privatised in 1992, after a long history of state and political management. In both companies the privatisation process was accompanied by important conflicts with very long strikes (immediately in Piombino, two years later in Warsaw). In both cases, these conflicts represented decisive turning points in workplace industrial relations. Historically, *Huta Warszawa* even more than the Piombino steelworks was a realm of workers' aristocracy, and salaries were by far the highest in the capital for the industrial sector. Party membership was also relatively high. From a productive point of view, both companies are today oriented to the high-quality-steel market segment, but only Piombino has an integral production cycle, including blast-furnaces and cokery.

In spite of these similarities, the meaning of workers' action in Warsaw was significantly different than in Piombino. *Huta Warszawa* was the leading plant in the emergence of Solidarity in the capital: the first to go on strike in solidarity with Gdańsk workers, and the most 'militant' during the whole 1980-81 period (Drażkiewicz and Rychard 1990). The Warsaw population still remembers the striking *Huta Warszawa* workers marching to the centre screaming '*chodźcie z nami*' ('come with us'). In 1990, the local trade union played a leading role in the *Siec*, the inter-factory net which almost alone and independently from the national Solidarity opposed Balcerowicz's 'shock therapy' (Ruszkowski 1991; Gilejko 1993). In the early '90s, the *Huta* workforce was called 'the army of the President', because of its support for Lech Wałęsa.

In 1992, 99% of the *Huta* workforce actually accepted company privatisation in a ballot. The situation in the state-sector looked dark, and two years earlier the unions themselves had been compelled to reduce salaries by 30%. When Lucchini eventually took over the steelworks, he promised large income increases ('at Italian levels within ten years', the workers say they were told, while in 1992 their income was about eight times lower than in Italy). The large-scale reduction of the workforce did not meet particular resistance. This occurred not only because the Warsaw labour market displays a continuous supply shortage, but also because, contrary to the 'homo sovieticus' theory, many workers were willing to exploit the opportunities opened up by the transformation process.

The two-month occupation strike of 1994 was mainly motivated by the total lack of investment and salary increases up to that point. This was due at least in part to legal problems with the property assets of the company. Other reasons for the conflict were cuts in spending on spares (according to the workers, machines were held together by strings), increases in accidents, excessive overtime, and the violation of union agreements by the company (Gilejko, Gieorgica and Ruszkowski 1997). The strike took a very adversarial form, was not without anti-Italian feeling (in a demonstration the strikers threw pots of macaroni at the Italian embassy), and also gained the attention of the media abroad. The Polish media initially displayed some sympathy towards the national pride of the strikers. However, this suddenly turned into hostility when the class nature of the strike became evident with the proposal to restart production under the workers' control.

Finding a solution to the conflict required the mediation of important politicians, a bishop, and the secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation. Eventually a compromise was found, and an elaborate participation system, with a bipartite management board, was designed and implemented. Within two years salaries had become the highest in the Polish steel industry, and modernisation had started at least in some workshops. Discontent remained about ownership: workers were not given shares, as happened with companies privatised later on. Like at Fiat, this issue has remained a constant trade union claim to the government and an important obstacle towards orderly industrial relations.

The *Huta Lucchini* now resembled the reformed Eastern German steelworks, rather than the other, still state-owned, Polish ones (Von Hirschhausen 1996; Hardy *et al.* 1996). After a few years, however, a feeling of disappointment started to emerge among the unions, and all the more so among the workers, with the participation system implemented in the plant. Employer-union relations took different forms according to the level and the issue, ranging from conflict to alliance. For instance, the two sides combined vis-à-vis the government to obtain higher subsidies for the plant within the steel-sector restructuring plan.

At the same time, the plant Solidarity returned to a political commitment they had left outside the factory since the early '90s. The leader of the union in *Huta*

Lucchini-Warszawa is also an influential politician in Warsaw AWS (the party created by Solidarity in 1996), who after the electoral victory in 1997 met the premier on a regular basis, before finally being elected president of the regional organisation of Solidarity. Solidarity of the *Huta Lucchini-Warszawa* also plays a leading role in the developing national industry-wide bargaining, and even in the writing of the steel industry restructuring plan with the government and the European Union. Not only Solidarity, but also the post-communist *Hutnicy* (*Związek Zawodowy Hutników*, linked to the all-Polish *Metalowcy* and OPZZ), have been directly involved in recent electoral campaigns, especially in local elections. However, both *Hutnicy* and Solidarity endeavour to keep work and political matters separate, managing in this way to keep good reciprocal relations. The cooperation between *Hutnicy* and Solidarity and the similarities revealed by the interviews suggest that the activists of the two unions can be treated as a single group in many respects (the strike of 1994 was conducted jointly by the two unions).

Today about 2/3 of the *Huta* workers are members of Solidarity and about 1/10 are in *Hutnicy* (although there are doubts as to the reliability of *Hutnicy* figures). In the early '90s, Solidarity 80¹³ was also active, organising around a former Solidarity leader, Seweryn Jaworski, known for his religious convictions (he always carried a large crucifix). Solidarity 80 dissolved after having refused to take part in collective bargaining with the new employer, revealing the unsuitability, in this plant, of a union action not linked to work matters.

The factors of political centrality together with the traditional attention to work-related matters explain the class-political orientation of the *Huta* unions, which are far from the communitarian and labour-market-oriented attitudes of their counterparts in Piombino.

Fiat Tychy

No other Western company has been present in the communist world like Fiat. The first production programmes in the USSR date from 1931, in Yugoslavia 1954, and in Romania 1977. In 1970 the enormous factory of Togliattigrad – about five times bigger than Mirafiori was in 1939 – was opened in the USSR. In Poland, Polski Fiat was already producing cars in 1934. In 1948 the first agreement with the People's

Republic of Poland for the production of Fiat cars in the FSO (*Fabryka Samochodów Osobowych*) plant in Warsaw caused the irate reaction of the US administration (Castronovo 1999: 843). In 1965 a new contract with FSO, and in 1971 the first agreement with FSM (*Fabryka Samochodów Małolitrażowych*) were signed. The latter foresaw the production of the 126p model in Bielsko-Biała and the construction of a new factory in Tychy. In 1987, Fiat became the first Western manufacturer to concentrate the entire production of a new model (the *Cinquecento*) in an East European country – at FSM. Nevertheless, all these factories working under Fiat licence remained typical socialist factories, where, for instance, in the case of a labour shortage the army was called to the workshops for help.

FSM, which owned the factories in Tychy and Bielsko-Biała, was taken over by Fiat in 1992, one of the very first cases of an important privatisation with foreign capital. Fiat is still the most important foreign investor in Poland – and also the first ‘Polish’ exporter. It has been noted that human resources management at Fiat is strongly centralised, following an ‘ethnocentric’ pattern. Given the high mobility of managers, one might say that the interlocutors of the Polish and Italian trade unions are *physically* the same.

The Tychy body plant employs about 7,000 people and produces the *Cinquecento* and *Seicento* models for the global market. It was built in the ‘70s to produce the Polish Fiat 126. The workforce was carefully chosen from among the best graduates of technical and engineering schools, as the factory was intended to become the cream of Polish industry. Tychy workers, with an average age of around 37, are still much younger than their colleagues in Turin. Along with the factory, residential areas were built for the employees, strengthening their link to the workplace. The plant is located in the industrial and mining district of Upper Silesia. The city, which today has 200,000 habitants, was built from nothing in the post-war period and is defined by Polish sociologists as an archetypal socialist town (Szczepański 1993).

Tychy workers and unions, who in 1990 had designed a privatisation plan giving a majority stake to the workforce, did not welcome the new investor. The negotiation of the take-over occurred in Warsaw, without consultation with the local unions, with the exception of two leaders. A two-month occupation strike stopped the

factory in the summer of 1992 and marked the further development of workplace industrial relations (Gąciarz and Pańków 1996b; 1997). The industrial action was organised by the small radical trade union Solidarity 80, and, after the first few days, was opposed by the main trade unions Solidarity and *Metalowcy*. It should be noted that at the time of the strike Fiat was not yet the official owner of the plants, so that the unions lacked an opposing management side. The strike took on a national relevance but the most important political forces and the mass media were hostile to it. Finally, the intervention of the police put an end to the industrial action without any of the workers' demands being met. The experience of the strike, in spite of its failure, crystallised a militant identity, and 2,000 out of 2,800 members left Solidarity to join Solidarity 80. Surveys carried out in the town at that time confirm the considerable solidarity of the population with the strikers: 60% considered that the workers were right, and only 18% thought the opposite (CBOS 1992).

After privatisation most workshops (especially the assembly line and the painting workshop) underwent a substantial modernisation. Work organisation was redesigned and an enormous increase of productivity followed. Fiat waited until 1996 before implementing the 'Japanese' organisation already launched in the Italian and Brazilian factories. The management thought that a period of clear distinction of roles would extirpate the former 'socialist' participation and Solidarity self-government.¹⁴ At the same time, in 1996, real salaries started slowly to increase above the inflation rate. Among the most important changes introduced in the first period of restructuring are (Gąciarz and Pańków 1997):

- the weakening of the Polish executives' position;
- the weakening and the numerical reduction of technicians in R & D;
- a massive move from indirect to direct production jobs, and increased internal mobility and working time flexibility;
- the recruitment of young workers less qualified than the old workforce;
- an impressive drive for workers' retraining (3,000 workers were involved in training between 1992 and 1993, and hundreds visited the Italian plants), which according to the workers had much ideological and little technical content.

Another important change was the widening of salary differentials (the ratio between the pay of a workshop director and that of a manual worker increased from 3 to 7 times).

The strike of 1992 left as a legacy agitated and adversarial workplace industrial relations, with numerous conflicts not only between employer and unions but also among and within unions. A long sequence of splits has occurred. Today ten different trade unions are present in the Polish Fiat factories,¹⁵ and in Tychy Solidarity no longer exists, the residual militants having created in 1997 *Solidarność-Catholic Trade Union Father Popieluszko*.¹⁶ The disappearance of an institution like Solidarity reveals what drastic changes can be produced by the entry of foreign capital.

The attitude of the employer to the unions is well revealed by the company bulletin, *Wiadomości*, which for instance in 1996 charged the unions of being manipulated by competitors like Daewoo or Opel. The attitudes of most unions towards the employer are equally, if not more, hostile; moreover, the unions also tend to be antagonistic towards each other.

A certain improvement in industrial relations occurred only in 1998, when a complete collective agreement for Fiat Auto Poland was finally signed. To improve the situation the company even organised training for union representatives and implemented a more formal system of communication. At the same time, however, fears emerged about the worsening employment situation (due to increased competition in the Polish automotive market) and about the wide process of outsourcing.

Altogether the unions organise over 50% of the workforce. Dominant are the radical unions and especially *Sierpień 80*. The only 'moderate' union is the post-communist *Metalowcy*, which in 1996 was even accused of being a sort of 'yellow union' although in other situations it collaborates with the other organisations.

Tychy workers are embedded in one of the largest industrial districts of Europe, and display typical working class features. In 1981 Touraine found among Silesian workers the highest level of class consciousness. Insofar as Tychy trade unions concentrate today on work conflict much more than on political issues, they display some parallelism with the Rivalta situation in Italy.

Fiat Bielsko-Biala

The other Fiat plant, in Bielsko-Biala, is older and slightly larger than Tychy. The general management of Fiat Auto Poland is situated here. The workshops (both body and engine production) are more old-fashioned and have not undergone the same modernisation as those in Tychy. Bielsko-Biala is located not far from Tychy, but is in fact outside Silesia, in a small mountain district on the border with the Czech Republic. The workforce is socially and culturally much more homogenous than in Tychy, and is very concerned with the problem of the economic future of the region. In 1998 the town of Bielsko-Biala revealed a strong localism by mobilising against the administrative reform which erased Bielsko-Biala voievodship (district) and attached it to Upper Silesia.

In the Fiat plant unions are moderate and weak: the unionisation rate is around 40% with *Solidarity* and *Metalowcy* being the strongest organisations. The radical unions *Sierpień 80* and *Solidarity 80* here have only a few dozen members. *Solidarity 80* here has explicit right-wing orientations, similar to those of *Popieluszko* in Tychy (although this is not the case everywhere in Poland). During the summer of 1998 it was directly engaged in the demonstrations in defence of the 'Pope's Cross' in Auschwitz,¹⁷ and the local leader is also an activist of the nationalist party KPN.

Bielsko workers did not take part in the 1992 conflict which blocked the Tychy plant for two months, and many of them even participated in a company-led demonstration against the strikers in Tychy (although the interviews reveal that their participation was anything but voluntary). After privatisation in 1992, in Bielsko – as well as in Tychy – only one short strike was called, in September 1994.¹⁸ The weakness of union organisation leaves the field open to other, individual and not class-based, forms of conflict like of sabotage. It is an old finding of academic industrial relations that forms of conflict are largely interchangeable, the trade union channel being only one of them (Knowles 1952; Ingham 1974). In Bielsko, the typical forms of class action are hardly visible. *Solidarity*, and to a slightly lesser extent *Metalowcy*, are instead very involved in politics, and tightly linked to external political activity. The features of a closed community, not particularly involved in class action, make this plant somewhat similar to the Lucchini one in Piombino.

In 1998, due to increasing competition on the Polish market and to the planned cessation of production of the old model 126p, the Bielsko workforce started to look excessive. 600 temporary contracts were not confirmed, and 650 workers were temporarily reassigned to Tychy. The fear of unemployment instantly induced a wage restraint and an alliance among different unions. The workers and the unions started to suspect that Fiat might leave in Poland only the assembly lines, following the example of most other auto producers.¹⁹ Bielsko plant, with its engine production and its old models, is structurally in a worse situation than Tychy. However, rather than with the market union leaders associate these difficulties with to the situation of the local community: the problems, they argue, originate in the loss of autonomy by Bielsko voievodship.

It would be too difficult to compare the Polish plants with a national model as was done with the Italian plants. This is because, as the next chapter will show, Eastern European situations display, together with important parallelisms, also distinctive deviations.

1.3. *The collection of interviews*

The 91 interviews of members and activists of the Fiat and Lucchini unions were carried out under different conditions, something which must be taken into account while evaluating the findings. As always in qualitative research, much incidental information has been extremely useful. It would be impossible to assess workers' assertions about their economic situation without having visited their flats and having travelled in their cars. An unexpected but inestimable source of information on Italian-Polish relations within the factories proved to be informal contacts with a number of interpreters working or having worked in the plants. Moreover, as Mehan's cognitive ethnology suggests, relations to the field must become an integral part of the findings.

Only the first interviews in the Fiat plants and some interviews in the *Huta Lucchini* were carried out in the workplaces. The Fiat management's withdrawal of permission for access to the plants²⁰ at first appeared to be a drawback, but it revealed itself to be paradoxically positive at least with the most radical unions. In workers' eyes, it neutralised the suspicion consequent upon the employer's involvement in the

investigation. Some Polish workers even revealed that they would be afraid of meeting a researcher in the workplace, dreading being labelled as 'political militants'. Secondly, carrying out interviews outside the trade union offices in the plant made it easier to express any criticism of the union itself.²¹

Eventually, interviews were carried out in the plants, in trade union or political parties' offices outside the plants, and in pubs or cafeterias (especially in Poland). It is not necessary to resort to social psychology to understand that a talk in a pub takes a different form from one held in an office. It is even easier to understand that while interviewing three workers in sequence in one afternoon in a pub, the social obligation of drinking a beer with each one somewhat affects the quality of interviewer's questions, at least during the third conversation. In few cases interviews were not carried out individually, but with two or three people at the same time. This increased spontaneity and talkativeness but probably created some 'social pressure interference' on certain topics.²² Nevertheless, the 'soft' treatment of the data, attentive to the internal coherence of the talks more than to pseudo-quantitative schematic comparisons among interviews, should be sufficient to prevent significant distortions. In such an open investigation, variety is preferable to uniformity, even if natural scientific methodological criteria risk being violated.

Different unions treated the researcher in different ways. It is very significant that when Fiat had already refused access to the factory, the *Metalowcy* accompanied me inside without any formality. By contrast *Sierpień 80* and *Popieluszko* officers from the same plant told that if *they* had asked for permission to invite me, this would have guaranteed that I would never be allowed to approach the factory. It is also interesting that the *Metalowcy* offices in all plants (Bielsko-Biała and Warsaw, to a lesser extent Tychy) are very quiet and ordered while in those of the other unions there is a continuous movement of people. Finally, very significant is that the most 'militant' or communitarian unions, in both Italy and Poland, were much more open to finding people willing to be interviewed. In this ranking, the unions of *Huta Warszawa* occupy the last position, just after the Uilm in Turin, while the Piombino unions, *Cobas*, and *Sierpień 80* were the most co-operative. In the 5th chapter I shall discuss the relevance of these differences in conceiving trade union commitment.

The research question was to understand how people look at their own activity at work and in the union. This is however too abstract a question to be asked. Since directive, particular questions had to be avoided, the only possibility was to give a 'structure of talk' to follow. There were two options: the historical one or the everyday life one. The first consisted in asking people about their history at work and in the union. Trade union activists are quite confident with historic narrative, and this is the easiest way to get autonomously developing talks. The second option implied asking them to recount what they actually did every day. This could be more interesting for studies of pure sociology of work, of everyday life, and of organisation. Since the working hypotheses required an understanding of past experience and of political culture, the first option was chosen. However, several workers quickly abandoned a narrative structure in order to concentrate on other sorts of discourse, and coherently with the non-directive assumption this was accepted even when they 'got off the point'.

Detailed information on the sample and the interviews can be found in the annex.

2. The disintegration of class consciousness: the explosion of the IOT triangle

2.1. The interpretation of the interviews

The analysis of the interviews has followed several general epistemological principles, but not a predetermined iterative procedure such as content analysis (Berelson 1952), proposition analysis (Ghiglione and Blanchet 1991), or opposition relations analysis (Raymond 1968; Lévi-Strauss 1964). While these procedures are important in socio-psychological studies, and valuable in recalling the need to respect the singular coherence of the interviews against over-confident cross-interview treatments like thematic analysis, it would, in a sociological comparative study, be sterile to limit the study to them. In fact, they lose their usefulness when a very low number of interviews is exceeded, just as a statistical model loses its usefulness by introducing too many variables. Moreover, one can seriously doubt – on the basis of the considerations made in the first chapter on qualitative methodology – whether

these procedures can ever achieve a 'unique' objective interpretation. Meaning analysis is rather inexhaustible and necessarily polemical.

The first principle was to follow a 'constant comparative method' as expressed by grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967): during the collection of the interviews the findings were continuously re-examined and compared, searching for similarities and contrasts and trying to make sense of them. The second was to investigate the taken-for-granted, which became more evident thanks to the constant comparison. Different things were taken for granted in different places, and this required a deeper understanding. In this way the 'belief universes'²³ were reconstructed and questioned. Thirdly, a progressive proposition coding, first open and then gradually axial, integrated, and theory-oriented, was undertaken. The process is gradual in order to respect the substantive categories of the actors and their internal coherence, in a way inspired by grounded theory and exemplified by Demazière and Dubar (1997). It was maintained that interviews display *words* and not *facts*, and therefore can be understood only in their coherence. Only after a sufficient codification could a systematic comparison and in some cases a typology be proposed, following empirical procedures of typology (Grémy and Le Moan 1977). Uncoded interviews, all the more so if in two languages, are too heterogeneous for a comparison.

Of this long process only the last phase (the final comparison of already coded interviews) will be described in this text, which has an empirical-sociological nature and not a methodological, psycho-sociological or epistemological vocation. However, I will repeatedly give examples of the way the concepts are built, and of how theoretical categories are linked to the 'substantial' ones (proper to the actors).

This chapter will deal with the hypothesis of a parallel disintegration of class consciousness. In this section the codes of the interviews will be examined insofar as they are references for the definition of identity, the opposition and the goals of the union activists (the I-O-T components of class consciousness). The following section will account for the different categories the actors use as negative references, and whose consistency is evidence of a global process of disintegration.

2.2. Identity

2.2.1. A plurality of references

Trade union activists define themselves in different ways, and often only implicitly. Among the three I-O-T principles, identity displays the strongest variation, and consequently is the most difficult to interpret. A first distinction should be made between *individual* and *collective* identity. However, this point will be more extensively treated in the 5th chapter, in relation to the subjectivation problem. Here, I shall consider only collective identity. The kind of collective identity defined as 'individual' means that the distinctiveness of the union – as a collectivity – is seen to be in its care for the individual.

Because of the high variation, the progressive proposition coding could not reduce the number of identity forms below eleven. They are presented in Table 3 for the different plant cases. Each interview could be assigned more than one identity reference (multiple identities), and in a very few cases no clear identity reference was detected. Therefore the sum of the cases does not coincide with the total of observations. However, in such small samples, much more important than frequency is the way in which a reference is present. Language is a social and not an individual attribute, therefore it must be understood and put in context rather than counted.

This qualitative-empirical evaluation, parallel to the quantitative one, is shown in the table in the following graphical way. In bold characters will be shown the references which strongly structure the interviews, and which are coherent with the other interviews of the group even if not explicitly present in all of them. In italic characters are presented the cases which appear either in a non-dominant way, or in interviews which for some individual reasons deviate from the local pattern. Negative frequencies mean that a particular identity is explicitly rejected by the interviewee.

The identity references of Table 3 require a definition and some illustrative examples.

Table 3

| Identity form | pol. | hist. | weak | power | moral | culture | work | class | comm | nat | indiv |
|---|---------|---------|------|-------|-------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-------|
| Fiat Bielsko Solidarność N: 9 | - | 6 -1 | 8 | - | 2 | 2 | 3 -1 | 3 -1 | 2 | 1 | - |
| Fiat Tychy Sierpień 80 +Federacja N: 14 | - | - | 9 | 4 | 2 | - | 7 -2 | 8 -1 | - | 1 -1 | 4 |
| Fiat Tychy Popieluszko N: 2 | 2 | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | 1 | - | 1 | - |
| Fiat Tychy Metalowcy N: 3 | 1 | - | 1 | - | - | 1 | 1 | -2 | - | - | 1 |
| Huta Lucchini Solidarność +Hutnicy N: 11 | 1 | 3 | 3 | - | 1 | - | 4 -3 | 3 -2 | - | 1 | 2 |
| Fiat Mirafiori Fiom N: 9 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 5 -2 | 8 | 1 | - | 1 |
| Fiat Mirafiori Cobas N: 6 | 1 -1 | 1 -1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | - | - | 3 -3 | 1 -1 | - | 5 |
| Fiat Rivalta Fiom N: 8 | 2 | - | 1 | 2 | - | - | 4 | -1 | - | - | 3 |
| Fiat Rivalta Fim+Uilm N: 10 | - | - | 2 | 2 | - | - | -1 | -3 | - | - | 5 |
| Lusid Piombino Fiom+Cobas N: 16 | 4 | - | 6 | 2 | - | 1 | 8 -2 | 2 -2 | 6 -1 | - | 1 |
| Siderco Piombino Fiom+Fim N: 3 | 1 | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | 1 -1 | - | - | - |

Political identity refers to an ideological and/or party system cognitive framework: Left, Right, majority, opposition, etc. It often emerges in politicised trade unions like the Italian and Polish ones. However, it becomes central – that is, it organises discourse – only in particular situations and organisations. The cases where political identities acquire an importance comparable to work identities are the extreme-right *Popieluszko* in Tychy and the left-wing Fiom in Turin, more in Mirafiori than in Rivalta. In the *Metalowcy* case political identity is neither strong nor clear. However, in a union displaying no other value references, left-wing and anti-

clerical orientations are the only bases for common identity, and are therefore *relatively* dominant. More important is that, with the exception of *Cobas*, political identity is almost exclusive to elderly activists.

I already knew about the union in Apulia [before migrating to Turin], because the greatest trade unionist of all time, Giuseppe Di Vittorio [the post-war Cgil leader], was born amongst us. (...) During the struggles of 1969 I saw older workers weeping, and I asked them why. They told me that it was not because they didn't want to strike, but because after so many years of being pushed around they were once again able to go on strike, they could remember the struggles of the 1940s. Then I began to ask a lot of questions, so as to understand what the factory was like before. I became interested in the history of the union and of the PCI. [mf6]24

Since I was a communist, I believed that I wouldn't find a job anymore, that Fiat would never pick me. Instead, I arrived just when they really needed people. I had been elected to the communal council in the Matera province and later in Orbassano, I am proud of this even if I made lots of sacrifices to defend my convictions, but it remains the pride of having done things, maybe wrong but without opportunism. [rf2]

Political identity is usually signalled by a fear of political betrayal.

I'd really like the Right to govern the country, I'd really like it. But if Solidarity eventually only shares the governmental offices, then Solidarity will lose: people have expectations linked to the electoral promises. [tp1]

Similar to political identity is the *historical* one, which in addition creates a break between past and present. It is characteristic of Solidarity, a union considered by some observers to be a sort of myth (e.g. Frybes and Michel 1996). The activists of this union, unlike all of the others, strongly prefer a historical structure for their narrative. In Italy, historical identity is frequent amongst the Mirafiori Fiom activists.

I started union activity at the beginning of the emergence of the union, that is in 1980. Then the name Solidarity came out (...). The union, as it operated, was a spontaneous revolt, linked to workers' dissatisfaction, afterwards the intellectuals joined the movement. It was a social movement. What were we dealing with? With everything and anything (...) It was dangerous, a lot of anonymous party members were infiltrated (...). It lasted until the 13 December 1981. I was at the historic congress in Gdańsk and on the road they arrested us. (...) Now I have resigned from standing for the delegates' election because I don't like as it is now. [bs1]

In order to get advances it was necessary to be a party member, there wasn't any alternative, so I joined it. Most people in the party were there for personal interest. In 1980 we spontaneously and en masse moved to Solidarity and quit the party, with the exception of a few zealot leftover. We did it because we were fed up with that way of lying. We were Solidarity supporters, supporters of democracy, of a democracy we still didn't know. [hs7]

We went on strike when the dictators took over in Chile, because Chile wasn't far away; it was close to us because even in Italy at that time something similar was happening, a *coup d'état* by stealth... So we sounded an alarm for the country and for the union. I don't regret it, we did well because we kept democracy alive in this country, because democracy is not something guaranteed on paper but something that must be won day after day, inside the workplace as well as outside. [mf4]

However, this model of identity is less and less fruitful for union action. As sociological studies on memory have shown (e.g. Candau 1998), memory cannot now act as a foundation for collective identities: memory has become personal, flexible and opportunistic, and the 'holistic' rhetoric of history is regarded with increasing scepticism. As a young Polish Danone worker told me, few things leave Warsaw youth so indifferent as Solidarity's historical rhetoric.²⁵

In many cases identity is formulated on an indistinct weak-strong axis: we are weak, poor, mistreated... This stress on poverty (*weakness-based* identity) is the 'proletarian side' of class consciousness, which, however, if not associated with a positive working class identity, remains at a defensive stage. Birgit Mahnkopf (1985) calls it *Arbeiterkultur* as distinct from the *Arbeiterbewegungskultur*. As a rhetorical resource the stress on weakness appears here and there in all unions, but it is not only a matter of rhetoric: actually, in the most radical Italian union, the *Cobas*, the proletarian elements are rare. The most extreme, and 'politically incorrect', expression is the frequent Polish sentence 'we are white niggers'. The 'poor' image is a fundamental reference in the Polish Fiat factories, and, to a lesser extent, in Piombino, especially in the contractor company Siderco.

The worker is completely poor, he does ordinary, physical work, and for this work he gets some money, but this money is not enough to survive, only to vegetate. Everybody just lives in order to live, it's a dead end. It is not a problem of strength or will or character, he has children and he has to live. Not everybody goes and lies down on the railway track, but it is true, there are such cases, I personally know some cases of people who were that worn down. [bs7]

He [the employer] thinks and he creates, while we achieve nothing, we just wait for the moment to act but are unprepared. It is as if the employer has the union surrounded on every side, we are in the middle, and the employer can strike whenever and wherever he chooses, and he will always win. We have neither lawyers, nor money. The employer can screw us however he likes. [bs5]

At a certain moment the elderly workers arrive at the point that they resign spontaneously because they can't afford to perform the job, their nerves can't resist. There are periods during the year when the number of suicides amongst Fiat workers grows. Nobody talks about it too much, but there are periods, like last year there were maybe four cases. People on the way out read the death notices at the gates, cases of 30-40 year old guys, these are not old people, they are young, but this is the effect of the job, of the stress and insecurity. [tz1]

The [contractor] firms have always been the weak link, the most exploited part, but at least before you could bargain. Now you can't and the *premio di risultato* [result bonus, the part of salary left to workplace bargaining] shows what happens. The law limited workplace bargaining to the *premio di risultato*. This was the result of the 1994 tripartite agreement, with the big pippen of two-levels bargaining, workplace and national. I have always contested it because in the small firms it has never worked, and history confirms it, we, as [contractor]

firms, have not been able to make workplace agreements since 1994, because they limited it to the *premio di risultato* but in the small firms the *premi di risultato* are impossible, the company doesn't even have the decency to discuss them. We have gone through years of being pushed to one side, the attempt is to completely eliminate the union, and there is a real risk that they will manage it. [sf1]

An opposite, *strength-based* kind of identity, consisting in a feeling of force and of a positive role, appears more rarely but is consistent among the radical unions of the Tychy plant (*Sierpień 80* and its split *Federacja*) and in Fiom in Rivalta. Such a positive self-definition is clearly linked to the experience of conflict, and to some extent has a rhetorical nature.

The *cultural* and *moral* identities, if appearing alone, are the furthest away from working class consciousness, and they appear especially in workers' communities. Indeed, workers' subculture played a decisive role in the development of unionism, as shown by Thompson (1963). Cultural and moral identity principles are useful resources for collective action (especially during crisis periods), but displace the focus from work conflict as the main field of class struggle. This is the case in the Bielsko plant, where one frequently hears expressions of the kind: '*I am a Pole*' [bs9], '*I was brought up with Catholic values*' [bs3], '*all of my family was in the opposition, it has always been conservative, these are our family traditions*' [bs5], '*I chose Solidarity because it was the most trustworthy union, the most patriotic, consisting of people ready to make sacrifices*' [bs9]. Rare expressions of these non-work identities were detected in the other Polish plants and in Piombino, but strong references to external 'values' also appear in the radical Cobas. In Solidarity, the fieldwork detected a few cases of enduring 'ethics of Solidarity'²⁶ among activists who presented themselves as a sort of 'conscience' of the trade union. They recall that union goals of justice were of a moral more than of a material nature, and are disappointed by those who do not remember it.

It was us who saved the factory, we cut our salaries (...). We cut our salaries by 35%, we took an unpaid holiday for two weeks, for the sake of saving this plant, because here maybe not everybody remembers what could have happened, very simply, the shutdown of this factory. Just looking at the human side, people with my qualifications, or electricians, or others, wouldn't have any problem finding a job here, but what about the people who do the real steelworking jobs, casters, millers (...)

They say it was better, but I ask who for? Even chatting in the workshop, a guy who's going to retire says that it was better, I say what was better? He could go on holiday, but can't he go now? Don't you remember, I said, after all you're older than me, that when there were 250 of us in the workshop there were only two places for four people each, and who went? Only that

nomenklatura and those secretaries, the same people, sometimes twice a year, the others didn't go at all. The coupons for the car, who got them? [hs6]

The *national* mode of self-definition appears only in Poland – where the employer is a foreigner – but much more rarely than one might expect according to the extensive literature on ethno-nationalism in Eastern Europe. It is dominant only in the singular *Popieluszko* union (but off the record), occasional and never central in the other unions.

But the Italians have forgotten that the Pole is able to mobilise, there will come a time when we will mobilise like in '56, in the '70s, in '80, and it will be tragic for the Italians, tragic for this factory and for the Italians. It's not like I foresee it, I'm not a prophet. Only it just comes from knowing what's happened that sometime it must happen. We're not talking about a revolution, but someday we'll square things up on all these things. We'll punish what did the government and what did those who have got the big factories and those who burgled this country. Not only me, the majority says that. [ta7]

The *communitarian* identity is present in Bielsko-Biala, especially in the form of self-distinction from the Silesian workers of Tychy.

It's difficult to agree with them, they are Silesians. They have quite a different mentality, and here there are the mountain people, with an extremely different mentality, like it would be difficult to agree with somebody who lives on the Mazurian Lakes, he has different customs. Similarly, they have different traditions: in the family only the man works, the woman stays at home because it has always been like that in Silesia, here among us it has always been different. [bs6]

However, it is in Piombino where the communitarian identity is the strongest. This is consistent with the typology proposed in the previous section. The fact that this occurrence is associated not with class identity, but rather with its rejection, is absolutely consistent with Touraine's view (Touraine, Dubet and Wiewiorka 1984: 27-32). By contrast, it differs from Kerr and Siegel's (1954) classical idea that union action is the strongest in the 'isolated masses' of homogenous workers' communities. Shorter and Tilly (1974) had already fruitfully contested that idea by showing how French work conflict was rooted instead in urban, socially complex contexts. Communities are indeed a resource for collective action, but only for defensive action, for they do not facilitate the development of 'class' action. The history of the *Acciaierie e Ferriere Piombino* is a supplementary example.

It's three generations that we're in the factory, my grandfather, my father and me, one town, one combative plant. [pf10]

I entered the factory in '73, I was 18. I already knew the factory because I had done the steelwork specialisation at school, here in Piombino, it ensured you a job in the factory and since there was the myth of the sure job you put aside other things in order to go into the

factory. Once inside, a thing you noticed at that time and which impressed you a lot was that of having many elders in the factory who basically oriented you in your choices, with the trade unions as well as with politics and also with the job. And there was certainly a very good relationship with the young workers, they really tried to teach them. [pf4]

Today, there remains of this identity above all a deep nostalgia for the times when all the jobs 'remained in Piombino and did not move to Brescia'.

2.2.2. The link to work and class

We can now shift to one of the most relevant sources of self-definition for the working class: *work* identity, including producer pride, skills, and the position in the organisation of work. Without any positive producer identity, class consciousness would hardly emerge.

The Italian worker is valuable. If you view things this way, the worker is worth a great deal, more than double the wages he gets... We are not stupid. I don't believe that the Italian worker, from the professional engineer to the lowest-ranked labourer, is an idiot, if we are managing to sell all these cars, which everybody considers fantastic, if we are even breaking into the American market. [mf3]

In its purest form, work identity implies the exclusion of non-manual workers. The presence of this argument among Solidarity activists confirms the interpretation of that movement as a workers' movement and is relevant for the workers vs. intellectuals debate mentioned in the previous chapter.

People who are in the UW [Union of Freedom, the liberal party formed by famous former dissidents and Solidarity experts] proposed a post-Solidarity alliance: I ask myself whether they were actually in Solidarity or were only advisors, aiming to escape earlier, because (...) they eventually did escape, Balcerowicz [UW president and at the time of the interview Finance Minister] is as he is, but what did he do in Solidarity? He's a professor and he's a theoretician, he's in the Union and what does he remember about workers' issues? He can't remember. [hs6]

Work identity is still widespread, but not in all situations. Notably, it is absent, apart from isolated cases, in the Bielsko-Biała and Siderco unions, as well as in the *Popieluszko*, *Metalowcy*, Fim and Uilm unions of the Fiat factories. Moreover, in most cases where work identity was detected, some 'counter-trends' were also present, with interviewees explicitly rejecting a work-related identity. Two examples of this escaping from work follow:

Definitely my commitment was linked to the school factor. The climate in Turin before was really heavy, uniformity, it was a Fiat mono-culture, but still Valletta's [the Fiat managing director of the '50s and '60s] Fiat. [mf2]

I started doing, I don't say that I enjoyed it, that it fulfilled my wants, but I did work. I thought that there would be some chances, but it turned out that there aren't. I'm considering whether I

should stay here at all, I have a couple of interests besides, I study at evening school, I have organised my time and once I've finished at the school I don't know, I haven't a flat... or an income, or anything here... there's nothing to count on. [ta6]

Similar but not identical to work identity is *class* identity. According to the conceptual definition drawn in the previous chapter, class *identity* must be carefully distinguished from class *consciousness*, since the former is only an aspect of one of the three I-O-T elements of the latter, which is a more complex construct. Consciousness is a thorough, dialectical definition of one's own field of action, while identity – taken alone – is static and may even be purely ideological. In other words, identity is simply a sort of self-definition: consciousness includes a view of the social context.²⁷

Class identity can be defined as a strong sense of class solidarity, where class is viewed as a collectivism not necessarily linked to offensive projects and excluding those who do not take part in collective solidarity. This collectivism is usually unconsciously instrumental, which contrasts with the dominant image of solidarity. Here it is necessary to define the term 'solidarity', quite an equivocal one in sociological thought. It enjoyed great favour until the beginning of the century, when it indicated (for authors like Marx, Durkheim, Tönnies or Michels) the capacity of the members of a collectivity (group, class or society) to act as a unitary subject. The best example is Durkheim's (1893) discussion of organic and mechanical solidarity. Later on the term solidarity almost disappeared, replaced by others such as social integration or consensus. In the last few decades, after the decline of functionalist and systemic approaches, the term 'solidarity' has reappeared in a different light. No longer a system or group attribute, it is now held to be an action motivation, and usually an individual one. No longer a reciprocal link of cohesion, but the motive of an asymmetrical relation where a subject X altruistically helps an object Y, supposedly in a worse situation. While the ideal of the first version was the gang of labourers, the ideal of the second is Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Rarely has a concept assumed such different meanings, even in a non-paradigmatic science like sociology. Solidarity-cohesion requires, and creates, institutions and organisations; solidarity-altruism by contrast is seen as pure when it develops *outside* organisations. This is relevant for the trade unions, a traditional field of 'solidarity'. Studies on trade unions now only rarely nostalgically concentrate on solidarity-cohesion (e.g. Fantasia 1988), which has

already been criticised by some sociologists in the '70s (e.g. Offe 1972). Now, much more attention is paid to the second version of solidarity (solidarity-altruism), and to its internal dilemmas (e.g. Zoll 1992; Bode 1997).

In this discussion I shall adopt the meaning of solidarity-cohesion and not that of solidarity-altruism. The latter still is conceptually hazy, as it covers completely different phenomena like cooperation and charity, which from a political-sociology point of view do not have any common denominator. Solidarity-cohesion, by contrast, is empirically disappearing but remains conceptually meaningful. It is in this sense, and only in this one, that the worker-solidarity decline can be discussed. The 'new' solidarity must still be defined, and this issue will be dealt with in the last chapter. Incidentally, the problem is made all the more concrete by the name of the trade union 'Solidarity', which is not only an *object* of definition but also an *active* determinant of the concept: the emergence of *Solidarność* eventually also influenced the ideologies of the Western unions.

References to class as a component of identity appear in both countries, although they are not omnipresent and some workers reject them. The endurance of class references in Poland must be stressed with regard to the historical hypothesis on the class nature of the early Solidarity (chapter 2): in all plants, for instance, Solidarity activists report that the employees who created the union and abandoned the party in 1980 were manual workers.

In the interviews, class-identity is deemed present where manifestations of solidarity, collectivism and egalitarianism are formed. Equality-orientation is indeed a necessary component of solidarity, considered as an action system (Pizzorno 1966).²⁸ This identity form is the strongest amongst the radical unions of the Tychy plants, and in Mirafiori, where it is characterised by a strong egalitarianism. Cognitively, it is linked to the image of the mass-worker. Because of this origin, it can be associated with sexist attitudes, although this is rare, especially in Italy where the exchanges between the feminist and labour movements have resulted in wide self-censorship (if not a thorough consciousness) in the trade unions.

Class solidarity, you can see it in people's attitudes, in helping a mate with his work when he needs it, in the belief that people must not betray one another (...). In a class society, the great majority of people are those who work, who are aware of their rights, people who do not have much education but who understand who is a friend and who is an enemy. [mf7]

In those unions it has been different, there are people, maybe not among us, but in the other unions in the factory, there are people in careers, aiming to sit at the table regardless of the consequences for other people. It's known that they take bribes, that they make decisions according to the bribes from the Italians, they sign different things which don't correspond to members' wishes, this doesn't matter for them. There was such a discussion once, our guys went to a meeting with the management board, a representative from one of the other unions said to our guys 'let sign, what will it cost you?', my rep says that he won't sign as a matter of honour, and the other one said 'why do you care about people, I don't give a damn about people' [the interviewee uses an untranslatable expletive]. We have it recorded on tape. (...) Krzaklewski [the successor to Wałęsa as Solidarity president and the leader of the AWS party] came here to the factory, they invited him obviously, came with the directors, and how did he come? Pogrzyski, our national leader, they sent out patrols to prevent him from entering the factory. Krzaklewski, he came in a *Lancia*. [ta7]

By contrast, in other cases, such as *Metalowcy* or the Rivalta Fim-Cisl, there is a definite rejection of class identities, even if in different ways and directions.

In 1992 I was on the union executive and I went on strike for 3 days, I had lots of friends, when I gave up the strike they erected a wall around me, but I didn't care about that and I kept on working, and now it's OK (...), it was horrible but I survived. Now I have friends again, only now I am already different, I used to help everybody, whether from the union or not, now it's changed, life changes, people too. And it's not bad for me, it's all right. [tm3]

I arrived at Fiat in 1987 and I came from 10 years of experience in a small workshop. I must say that the experience was traumatic, so traumatic that for one or two years I looked for other jobs in order to resign from Fiat. I found an enormous lack of humanity when moving from the small to the big. (...) If a post is overloaded with work, they try to unload it, maybe even on a friend, saying to the boss 'that one works less than me'. That is, not only do they try to offload work, sometimes they try to give it to a specific person, this is even more 'yellow'. It's very difficult to find somebody who'll make a move for you, I never saw it (...). Myself, I do it this way, by now I have changed and as a matter of fact I consider myself a robot like the others, even if I still don't accept it that way. Before, I saw people who cared only about themselves, now I'm also becoming like that. If something's wrong, I quarrel, but for me, if it's somebody's else problem, I turn a blind eye, I avoid discussing it with the others, because sometimes people diddle you, it's happened. [ri4]

As already mentioned, class identity is only one of the identity components of class consciousness. 'Weakness' and 'work' identities are also essential. On this point it is important to notice a difference between the Tychy radical unions and the Mirafiori Fiom. In the former case, class, work, and 'weak' identities are strongly related.²⁹ In the latter, the 'weak' element is almost absent and the 'class' and 'work' ones are related to a lesser degree. Moreover, they are occasionally associated with the 'historic' pattern, and the examples given are generally from the past, mainly the '70s.³⁰ The fact that the two Mirafiori workers with the strongest class identity are also the only two white-collar workers in the sample, suggests that class identity, left isolated, has an ideological character, in the sense that it is not rooted in experience.

As Bauman (1982) explained, there is the risk that class rhetoric based on memory may overlook the real, current forms of social suffering.

There is a residual form of identity found in the interviews. This is the case of those who underline individual attributes as fundamental to their identity, and for the identity of trade unions as collectivities of *individuals*. They speak of the *man at work*, and sometimes of the *woman at work*, rather than of the worker or, even worse, the working class. This highly complex kind of self-definition was detected in Rivalta, in the Mirafiori Cobas, and to a lesser extent in Tychy.

I have always been independent as an unionist (...) You can have 20 degrees, but if you don't accept the dialogue as they want, you're done for. There, at Fiat people pay the price of being human beings, of saying 'sorry, I am a human being', this is the price one pays at Fiat. [mc3]

This last identity form is particularly relevant with reference to the subjectivation issue. This point will be more deeply discussed in chapter 5.

2.3. Opposition

2.3.1. The unavoidable conflict

For union activists the image of the adversary is clearer than the image of self. As a result, the propositions about Opposition are less heterogeneous and simpler to code than in the case of Identity (Table 4).

Virtually all of the interviewees had a concept of opposition, which means that they see their activity as bound up with conflict. One could take this for granted, since trade unions have traditionally always been in opposition to other actors. However, if one follows the sociological principle of questioning the obvious, one will immediately perceive that this is not self-evident. First, there are substantial differences in the *extent* and in the *ways* activists perceive this opposition. *Metalowcy* almost reject opposition altogether, and Solidarity activists from Bielsko-Biala have only a confused image of it. Secondly, and more important, since the beginnings of capitalism important currents of thought, also present within the trade unions, have argued for the non-conflictual character of work relations. In our interviews, in one way or another, almost all the activists in different national and plant situations perceive that they are engaged in an antagonistic relationship. This is an argument for the materialist thesis of the inevitability of work conflict, which arises primarily

between foremen and workers. When the conflict is described precisely in these terms, it takes on a *class* value in the sense illustrated in the previous chapter.

By blaming Fiat, I don't mean the managers, because they are in Corso Marconi [the Fiat head office], they don't know what happens in the factories, but of course it is the fault of the leaders of the Ute [*unità tecnologiche elementari* - basic technological units, introduced by 'Japanisation'], which until a few days ago were called teams. They are the ones who always try to push us to the limit, maybe to make a good impression on their superiors. [mf1]

Now man has been transformed into such a stupid machine. In the steelworks a saying started going round, 'you don't have to think, you have to do the job'. And this doesn't seem very good to me. For this I don't blame the management, God forbid, I don't blame Lucchini, he doesn't have any idea, but the management maybe yes, because through their substitutes and so on they send here (...). This can be seen first of all with the foremen, definitely, the relations with the foremen are really bad, that is, this happens in my workshop, I don't know about the others. [hs8]

Recently participation, 'concertation' and 'Japanese' production concepts have become increasingly popular, and they all undermine the idea of conflict (e.g. Womack, Jones and Roos 1990). It is interesting to see how activists view these topics in order to assess the relevance of the opposition principle. Not only is participation rejected by the activists of the most radical unions in the historically adversarial Mirafiori (Fiom and Cobas) – the most emblematic statement here was '*to make participation real, we must be more rigid*' [mf5] – but also within the most 'participative' unions discrepancies with the image drawn by the company (Fiat Auto 1997) emerge clearly. Apart from the fact that Fiat's recent experience remains very far from a democratic-participative style (Garibaldo 1993), and that various levels of participation may be distinguished (Cerruti and Rieser 1993), it is the idea itself of participation which takes a particular meaning in activists' eyes. The plant where participation is considered most developed is Rivalta. Here, the idea of participation is, however, rooted in a strong opposition feeling, sometimes in contrast to the central trade unions' attitudes.

The participative aspect of Fim is important, it is part of what are, we face problems in a constructive way. As regards the organisation [the external union], it tries to... in any case it pushes us on these matters because it takes it very much into consideration, that is, participation according to them...[hesitation] and according to me, in any case is constructive, that's for sure. But for me the situation should... I mean, there are different situations, not every situation can be approached through participation, which means that participation exists but should also be evaluated in some regards. When it is shaky, conflict remains (...). I already do it, participating in the workshop problems, so that if they ask me to do something *I participate, I don't discuss*. (...) There still are some problems, Fiat would even agree, *but which company wouldn't be interested in participation?*³¹ [ri9]

As Fim we're changing, with the discourse of the participative union (...) I absolutely agree, dialogue first, *but sometimes you feel they're making a fool of you.* [ri2]

After 1980, when there was a tremendous disaster in the union and it really broke down, now the union is regaining strength in the factories. Times change, people's mentality, work organisation, *we're forced to participate*, the other unions too, *without removing the struggle which after all is always behind work relations.* We participate because we want to solve workers' problems, and also to get more seriousness from the company side, who should show themselves interested in making people work better and in solving their problems. [ri5]

Participation, this is ruling the factory, establishing production on the basis of the staff, at the workshop level, every morning. It means preventing problems, involvement in ruling, concrete control. [rf8]

Table 4

| Opposition form | generic | class | work | past work | national | history | political | extrawork |
|---|----------|---------|----------|-----------|----------|---------|-----------|-----------|
| Fiat Bielsko Solidarność N: 9 | 7 -4 | 4 | 2 | 3 -1 | 3 | 3 | 1 | - |
| Fiat Tychy Sierpień 80 + Federacja N: 14 | 8 | 9 | 11 -1 | 3 -2 | 4 -3 | 4 -2 | 1 | - |
| Fiat Tychy Popieluszko N: 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | 1 | - |
| Fiat Tychy Metalowcy N: 3 | 1 -2 | - | 1 -2 | - | - | - | 1 | - |
| Huta Lucchini Solidarność+Hutnicy N: 11 | 5 -1 | 5 -1 | 5 | 3 | 6 -1 | 3 | 1 | - |
| Fiat Mirafiori Fiom N: 9 | 7 | 5 | 4 | 2 | - | 1 | 3 | - |
| Fiat Mirafiori Cobas N: 6 | 5 | - | 4 | 1 | - | - | 1 | 1 |
| Fiat Rivalta Fiom N: 8 | 5 -4 | 2 | 3 | 5 | - | 1 | - | 3 |
| Fiat Rivalta Fim+Uilm N: 10 | 5 -2 | 1 | 6 | - | - | 1 | - | 2 |
| Lusid Piombino Fiom+Cobas N: 16 | 11 -2 | 2 -1 | 8 -1 | -2 | - | -2 | 4 | 1 |
| Siderco Piombino Fiom+Fim N: 3 | 2 | 1 | 3 | -1 | - | - | - | - |

This does not imply that participation at Rivalta does not exist. By contrast, it underlines that effective, aware participation from the unions must be rooted in an

opposition feeling. Otherwise, participation is nothing other than an ancient, paternalistic practice. The same can be said about reciprocal trust: only if the unions maintain a separate identity, will trust be well placed, 'merited', instead of 'unmerited' in Crouch's terms.

Within industrial relations unmerited trust is most likely to be encountered in situations of deference; when the authority of employers is imbued with a paternal character which is believed by workers to lead employers to restrain the ruthlessness of their pursuit of labour-market advantages. Merited trust is more likely to be the result of experience with elaborate interactions over a period of time (...).

We may label the two forms of trust 'naïve' and 'experience-based'. If the former is sufficiently strongly accepted by a workforce, it is likely to be associated with feelings of identity towards the employer: no distinct interests are perceived, nor danger of the betrayal. What suits *alter* suits *ego*, because *ego* am part of *alter* (...). The latter will not lead to anything like complete identity. (Crouch 1993: 46)

Participation is seen as a continuation of war under different forms, to paraphrase von Clausewitz. In Rivalta, this is a consequence of the 1980 defeat. Similar opinions are expressed by the *Huta Warszawa* activists, quickly disappointed by the participation which began after the 1994 struggle. In Mirafiori, where the feeling of opposition takes a more political and general value, participation is rejected. These findings challenge the assumptions of cooperation as a matter of rational choice based on a recognition of common interests with the employer and a calculation of the possible gains from avoiding conflict. In the view of activists, participation is rather a forced choice, the result of a defeat, or alternatively a way of fighting only on work-related matters disregarding other issues. In fact, participation in Rivalta is associated with ongoing disagreement, and strikes there are more frequent and more successful than in Mirafiori.

In all the plants covered by this study work organisation was recently modified, to a greater or lesser extent, by the introduction of 'Japanese' production principles. Workers' 'participation' indeed increased, and according to some studies the relationship between workers and management also improved, even in the most 'adversarial' Mirafiori (Bonazzi 1997; 1998). However, crystallised attitudes give different meanings to specific measures. The interpretation of the *Fabbrica integrata* by the unions, in Turin as well as in Tychy, is generally negative and precludes its actual implementation. Numerous unionists denounce the fictively participative

character of some bilateral committees, and their weakening effect on workers' bargaining power.

The union made a big shit because now [in case of innovations] for two months you can't intervene on the charges, until the company verifies the problems and arranges it a little bit. But it is precisely in that period that there are the biggest problems, and the union cannot intervene according to the rule. This is sell, the union trampled on its own feet.³² [ri4]

Now there are the famous committees, which are meetings, tables, where we arrange little or nothing, we always remain at vague discourses. This is not a committee, when there were the workshop delegates, the area delegates, there was more power. Now on the contrary it's as we were imprisoned, for instance if I go to raise a problem of my team, they say 'no, this is not included in the *Fabbrica Integrata*, this belongs to the security commission'. And so you have to abandon it, the commissions are a real cheat. [mf8]

The aspects of Japanese organisation that increase worker's stress, even if they possibly reduce the physical effort, are easily detected, and described sometimes in class terms.

At the moment the worker is so tied up with different sheets of paper, that he basically can't manage to check the car, given the amount of forms there are to fill. And this originates at the technicians' level (...). All the technicians' sit down and make nothing: all their role, all the job is passed to the production workers, and they must, willy-nilly, make certain things (...) Formerly there were the gangs [*komórki*], now there are production *teams* [in English], formerly there was the foreman [*mistrz*], now there is the director of the production team... something else is worrying, that they introduced what they call TPN. This means that workers in production and in quality control, are generally responsible for the material they work on. [tz1]

Polish workers trust the employer so little, that they become afraid of 'participating'.

There are the boxes for mail, so that workers can express their problems,³³ I say 'let's write: why, what, how...'. Somebody said to me 'OK, but if they notice that I have written something, it doesn't matter whether it's positive or not, the important thing is that I wrote something, they can think that I'm complaining...'. Every attempt to integration... for instance in the cabins it was too warm and people wanted different clothes, shorts. But it was impossible to express it, because they are afraid, and to write something down, this is already unthinkable. [ta1]

Sometimes the refusal becomes radical.

And they exploit these situations to make fools of the workers, to impose models which are not ours, which are Japanese, like continuous improvement,³⁴ that whorishness, they convince them that they are useful to the productive process, once we were exploited, now we are human resources. [mf8]

The only relevant exceptions to this refusal are the *Metalowcy*, definitely collaborative, and Rivalta Fiom, which as already mentioned has developed an alternative vision of participation. The perplexed opinion of workers and trade unions on the new organisation principles has been confirmed by other studies (Garrahan and

Stewart 1995) and has been explained as a sort of '*proletarische Arbeitshabitus*' (Wittel 1998). Employers are actually aware of this problem as can be seen in their preference for 'green-field' sites. My interviews, however, suggest a supplementary explanation. Contesting of new management techniques is not simply a matter of generic, omnipresent and inherited '*habitus*'. It is more concretely rooted in the experience of conflict, and therefore affects primarily those unions with an open conflict tradition.

Similar conclusions can be drawn about political-level participation, called '*concertation*' or '*corporatism*'. At this level too separate identities remain necessary.

It is vital to actors in bargained corporatist systems that they retain their sense of separate identities, that they continue to rally their '*side*' and develop its symbols (...). Were the two sides to lose their sense of conflict and separateness, the whole system would become unnecessary and the representatives would lose their function. (Crouch 1993: 48)

In the plants we note not only that industrial workers maintain a separate identity, but also that they have a rather negative view of '*concertation*', especially in Piombino.

We face a cross-roads, if we go along with concertation, we get into the factory and they will talk to us; if we don't they won't give us that space. It seems to me that we're in danger of being sent away from the factory because we don't want to concertation. [pf10]

This incomplete commitment by the industrial workers suggests that the Italian '*social pacts*' of the '90s, rather than being a resurgence of corporatism (Regalia and Regini 1997; Regini 1997), only froze a conflict which was always susceptible to exploding – as it actually frequently does.³⁵ Similar observations can be made about Polish tripartism, which every year on the most important issue (salary indexation for the state employees) cannot reach an agreement and leaves the government free to take the ultimate decision.³⁶ From the workers' point of view, these kinds of cooperation with their adversaries are associated with a feeling of decline and social degrading, much more than with a feeling of achievement. And decline, for reasons which rational choice cannot easily explain (the structure of the decision is exactly the same whether the goal is to achieve gains or to avoid losses), may force cooperation at the top level³⁷ but makes a positive image of cooperation among workers more difficult. To summarise, the picture of concertation emerging from the Italian and Polish industrial plants confirms Crouch's most pessimist scenario: a situation where

it is quite possible for national shells of union (and employer) organizations to play an amicable though important game of social reconciliation with each other and with governments while at factory level a membership with which they have little real contact either behaves as it likes or is so oppressed by high unemployment that it cannot do anything at all, pact or no pact (Crouch 2000).

The relevance of conflict for the trade unions also depends on its frequently 'expressive' character, which is especially important for newly established unions.³⁸ This point was very well analysed about the Italian *autunno caldo* by Pizzorno's (1978) team, but was also shown by Kulpińska (1993) with regard to the waves of strikes in Poland in 1992-93. My inquiry illustrates it with two eloquent examples in which the usual cost-benefit calculation does not operate. The first is the 1992 strike in the Tychy plant, which although it completely failed, increased the Solidarity 80 (later *Sierpień 80*) membership from 200 to 2,000.

I personally don't regret that strike, we showed that we're a force. [ta7]

The strike of '92 wasn't a defeat, actually back then *Sierpień 80* gained members and from that time has basically remained at the same level. [ta1]

The second example is a strike organised by *Cobas* in a Mirafiori workshop although the demands had already been satisfied by the management. The shop steward's tale is eloquent.

The operative manager, that is the shop foreman, arrived, he says 'listen, in any case we are verifying...', 'I demand two more people' (...), 'It is impossible', 'At one o' clock there is a strike', 'No, no, look, now we'll see...', 'No, I am sorry, now let us do it'. We organise a strike against him, the guy starts praying 'look, now we'll place...', 'We have decided, I have already spoken with the workers, at one o' clock there is a strike'. 'We'll give you the two people!', 'Now stop it, first we strike and then we'll speak about it'. [mc2]

Both examples stress the importance of conflict for worker identity. This point is not exclusive to Touraine. It had been already made by Marx and empirically supported by Sainsaulieu.

...l'évolution du sujet [a lieu] comme si l'accès à l'identité ne pouvait être que le résultat d'une conquête sociale, d'une victoire dans les relations quotidiennes. (Sainsaulieu 1977: 314)

In a way, similar conclusions may be drawn about the employers' side, which is not however a topic for this piece of research. As Kozek (1999) argues, Polish employers mistrust corporatist arrangements because, being a young social formation,

are still in search for an identity. For this purpose, they need to mould an 'ethos' of their own, while participation in neo-corporatist structures would 'water it down'.

Only one trade union among those analysed in this study rejected any opposition principle: the post-communist *Metalowcy* from the Tychy plant. This union has apparently made a dramatic change in recent years, developing an orientation which is basically pro-market and pro-Fiat.³⁹ Their offices are full of typical Western-culture posters. Their leader, moreover, was previously in the Solidarity leadership, which he left because it was too 'old-fashioned'. From a political point of view, it is tempting to speak of a 'reconversion' of this trade union: from socialism to the market. Yet if one observes social relations in the company, a strong continuity in the *cogestion* practices of Soviet-type unionism (Lowit 1971) comes into view. In spite of the appearance of reconversion, a particularly strong 'path-dependency' is driving change. On the lack of any class principle among the *Metalowcy* in Tychy a statement by one of its leaders is emblematic:

Workers do not appreciate what the employer does for them. I do, because my wife is herself an entrepreneur. For instance, Fiat gives them overalls, but workers don't give this due consideration. But this is a lot... my wife, she doesn't give overalls to her employees.⁴⁰

2.3.2. The remains of the 'class' opposition

Touraine's focus on opposition as an element in the construction of social movements is a useful approach to the analysis of Eastern European trade unions. In the Russian case, it was discovered that breakdown of the Soviet Union put an end to the miners' movement, which became lame without its opponent (Berelowitch and Wieviorka 1996). The evolution of Solidarity can be interpreted in the same way, although the Polish union was more successful. Its resistance, however, was at the cost of keeping alive the former enemy (in their imagination at least), and of reinterpreting new opposing roles through the old categories. The relevance of opposition first of all explains why a blue-collar-worker-dominated union can endure as an explicitly right-wing organisation. Even more interesting is how the activists of Solidarity and its smaller offshoots manage to create a link between past and present opponents.

The majority of foremen are from the old nomenklatura (...). For me, keeping the old foremen is a waste because they aren't able to manage. The management at the beginning didn't carry

out a verification of the foremen and this was a mistake. Incompetence, lack of responsibility... [hs2]

That's only organisational chaos, they don't foresee any alternative... this organisation is communist. It provokes workers' frustration. We need a modern organisation. [hs4]

The current supervision board is composed of those people who were in the PZPR [the Polish communist party], and these are the same people, this is a real gang. These are the guys who stole the most in the factory, I'm not saying all of them, but 50% are people who stole tremendously (...) We went on strike [in the '80s] against the people who are now managers, foremen, against us, they remember it perfectly well (...). I am still recorded as 'political', that's funny, amazing and funny because the system has changed and I am still recorded as political. The vice-manager told me that. (...) I think that democracy means I have the right to say what I think without anything happening to me. And here there are methods like under communism at the moment you could say there is a regime, if I don't restrain myself tomorrow I could be out of work. [ta7]

These are people who will do anything in order to keep their posts, they don't care about the factory but only about their own jobs. They were called 'red', and the system broke down, now they are capitalists, the former director is a private entrepreneur and rules with the same people as before. We know all his story, who he was under communism. [ta8]

These are the old foremen, who grew up with communism, socialism, in those days they were educated and they maintained a certain attitude. Now they're only foremen and they are not ready to perform this job, they make it only with coercion. (...) These are people who received their offices... as it used to be 'on party lines', their party exploded and now they create this kind of capitalism, in our view this [system] is banditry. [ta1]

This old work opposition is so strong that it is still operative, for instance in the criticism of the so-called '*nomenklatural* privatisation'. The change of the legal identity of the employer (the *ownership form* of the means of production) does not undermine the subjective coherence of the opposition.⁴¹

The ownership is completely different, now it is completely different, there used to be, let's say, a social ownership of the whole factory. And there is still, let's say, an imaginary somebody who rules here, because this is a big factory, and you don't see the owner every day, because it's a group, some kind of shareholders, so this is not a one-person firm. For this reason it's similar to before, because before the owner was collective too. We know to whom it belongs, but at the same time we don't know it, because this is a group of people, shareholders, owners and so on. The attitude to work hasn't changed, and the organisation hasn't changed so much because of privatisation. People worked before and they work now, what is the difference if it belongs to Frank or to Wojciech? nothing changes, absolutely nothing. [bs7]

By contrast more important are the organisational constraints within the factory, which regardless of the mode of development (communist or capitalist) emerge from a certain industrial logic.

In the previous system there was the so-called socialist economy, but the economy can't be socialist or any thing else, the economy is just the economy. What you produce, you sell – you can't do it any other way. [hs6]

The ability to construct historical coherence is of decisive importance in Poland, but in another form also exists in Italy when changes in work organisation, like in the Fiat factories, deeply modify the former battlefield. Activists in Rivalta and an even greater number in Mirafiori assert that nothing has changed. By doing this, they seriously risk falling into pure ideology, but they manage to keep the union together.

The foregoing extracts raise another important issue, which was touched on in the previous chapter. This is the extent to which we can define Polish trade unions as having been involved in class conflict in the past. If a direct link between current conflict and previous conflict is made so clearly, this suggests that the former experience displayed at least some 'class' elements. Indeed work organisation under real socialism displayed many peculiarities, and workers' descriptions confirm the idea of an 'arhythmic taylorism'.

Under communism it was like that, before 1990 everyone simply pretended he was doing something, he'd look around when some director came from Bielsko, nobody managed to organise the work so that everyone could go on rhythmically and quickly. Somewhere something stopped and we had to pretend, fake or even hide, so that nobody could see that we were standing still. [ta7]

Despite these differences, the protagonists' references to class and work conflict in the past are distinct, even if rarer in comparison to the more 'historic' (and therefore more lucid in memory) political conflicts. In most of the cases, the political and class opponents are associated with a specific image of exploitation.

We carried out the plan as the foreman told us, regardless of whether we had the necessary people or not... unless the shortage of people was so tremendous that we could capture people or produce less. (...) [Now] for us it's better because when there weren't enough people but the foreman wanted to show off people had to work more. And this didn't make any sense. It was impossible to oppose it because what could you say? And we made worse and worse quality cars. Everybody can confirm it, (...) it was insane, when somebody works under constraint it will never be good. [bs8]

The party, always them, ruled the factory, it might have been under different names, whether the management or the plan or whatever, but it was always them. The party secretary didn't have any idea, but it was he who worked out the plan. [hs7]

Under FSM it was like that, the worse the better. The more broken cars, the more failures, the better, because they had the chance to steal. They wrote that the pieces they stole were lacking, the factory guard signed... The ordinary workers actually didn't steal. If the foreman or the director didn't allow it, it was impossible for workers to steal, maybe with foreman's cooperation they could have done it but alone it was hard. [ta7]

There is always such an attitude towards working people from those who are at the top, who rule, who control. And this attitude is at least bad, this can't be changed overnight, the relations are *still* bad. [bs7]

If work relations are *still* bad, this implies that they were bad in communist times: bad work relations are not therefore a distinguishing feature of capitalism, but rather an aspect common to all factories in industrial society. Very revealing, in this regard, is the tale of the abolition of piece-work in Bielsko-Biala, which took place *before* privatisation.

It just happened that before Fiat's entrance the union asked for piece-work to be abolished, yes, it happened before Fiat's entrance. It's good that it happened like that, because I don't know whether we would have managed it later, we can't be sure about that. Some people asked why management agreed to the abolition of piece-work. Afterwards it didn't exist anymore, and nobody could ask for its restoration, because that would be a non sense. We had been fighting for quite a long time for it, so that at least at on the assembly line and in the welding shop, we could make up the appropriate plan for the actual quantity of people. [bs8]

It must be noted that the unions most embedded in work and class opposition are also those most directly related to the 1980 social movement experience, as their names reveal ('Solidarity 80', 'August 80'). I recall here that most Polish activists share right-wing political orientations. Therefore, their references to a class opposition can hardly be due to ideology, unlike some Italian activists who repeat trite Marxist formulas. Polish workers have not read about work conflict: they have experienced it.

By contrast, it is not in Catholic Poland, but in the communist-voting Piombino that the presence of class conflict in the past is denied by activists. This has to do with Piombino being a politically regulated, homogeneous community.

At that time, the experience with the foreman and the shop steward wasn't bad, people were well-intentioned, they discussed things, they talked to each other. It's clear, if there was a decision taken by the foreman the shop-steward intervened, the union was present, somehow the union was present through the shop-steward, who made his comments and said whether something could be done or not, whether there were security conditions, certain things. It was a nice experience because it worked and foremen, shop-stewards, and the union all agreed. [pf12]

It was much easier, now I realise that it was much easier to participate in union activity when the boss [the interviewee uses the class-related term *padrone*] was the state, because before we always said '*il padrone, il padrone*', but we didn't know what the *padrone* was like, in fact we have met the *padrone* only now. [pf9]

The Piombino unions were particularly strong, controlling recruitment, qualification levels,⁴² and work tasks. Control over work was different from that achieved by Fiat workers in the '70s. It was more pacific and was not so much about

the regulation of effort. In order to guarantee high employment and qualification levels, it concentrated on the stoppage of task flexibility (internal mobility).

In Piombino a watertight system had been created, tasks were fixed for everybody, the young worker reached only the door but he was forbidden to turn the door-handle because this was the task of somebody else. [pf7]

To give you an example, in my workshop we risked stopping the factory because we refused to push a button which opened the container (...), there was a worker with the exclusive job of pushing that button and nothing else. [pf15]

A last point about the Eastern European past. Interviews reveal how the lack of a developed monetary system did not preclude a feeling of exploitation. Actually, Polish industrial workers repeat that with their productive work they had created all the national wealth, and sometimes give concrete examples in which they were sent to work outside for reasons of social interest. The fact that this wealth was not administered according to their wishes is seen as proof of exploitation, and the current privatisation of that wealth is considered to be a definitive expropriation.

We built residential districts, the ice-rink, swimming pools and so on, everything has now been taken over either by private entrepreneurs [a pejorative, *prywatyzacji*, is used] or by some kind of City Council, and workers have nothing of it. [ta1]

After examining the different opposition forms (Table 4), it can be said that only in the case of the Tychy radical unions is the opponent considered to be the one who organises work in a way conflicting with workers' aspirations. This is the basis for class consciousness, and probably a reaction to the implementation, in the early '90s, of Taylorist-like work organisation. Particularly significant in this plant is the frequent reference to the abolition of piece-work and to the disadvantages of the assembly line, to which many workers previously doing skilled work were moved.

Class opposition rooted in work conflict is not the only way in which the trade unions express relations of opposition. Table 4 indicates a number of other ways in which the opponent is identified.

In many cases, a simpler work opposition appears, which is a criticism of how the employer organises economic activity, but not of the direct, collective relationship between foremen and workers. This often happens in the former official unions of Warsaw, which are engaged in political as well as in work-related issues but lack the Solidarity tradition of 'class' opposition.

They [the authors of the restructuring plan 'Meta'] are people who don't have any idea about working here. Or they are people who were in production, didn't prove themselves able to work, and moved to Meta, there are such people. [hm3]

In relatively few cases non-economic categories are used. This is the case of nationalism, which is more frequent here than in the case of identity. This difference suggests that nationalism is little more than an emergency resource for Polish workers which is used to account for reality when other categories do not work. Since they cannot, for historical reasons, explicitly use class arguments, nationalism also appears in Tychy where the conflict is nevertheless class-based. In many cases, however, it seems that the nationalist representation of conflict overlaps with the class one.

They cut the funds for the employees. The only thing they do is a '*Festa Italiana*'. The city council this year put up 900 million for a *festa* organised by the Italians. It seems to me that all around the world if there is a big company in a town, this company offers something, here we see that the opposite is the case (...). They fund disparate things, but nothing for the employees, this year they organised this '*Festa Italiana*' but on a working Saturday, so that workers could not come. [ta1]

We, in the foreign-owned companies, have bigger costs because we have to maintain the Italian staff, that's why there are bigger operating costs and less money for salaries. [hs2]

The worker is fearful and performs his job although he knows that it won't work, that it will destroy it, he fears the consequences. If before his vision was broad, now it's narrow like a laser light. The Italian representative, when is there, after he says 'I was misunderstood, I was wrongly translated', he holds back. [hm3]

If nationalism were really the problem, identity (and totality) would also have been defined in that way. More empirically, it can be noted that as an Italian researcher I have been treated not only politely, but even with warmth by the most radical Polish activists. The context of the nationalist statements and the conduct out of the inquiry allow me therefore to reject the thesis, suggested by other researchers (Gąciarz and Pańków 1997: 97) that the conflict at Fiat Auto Poland is of an ethnic-cultural character. Moreover, in other, non-Italian, foreign-owned Polish plants (Daewoo and Danone) similar, even if weaker, arguments were heard. Fiat is therefore not significantly deviant in this regard.

Sometimes, in Italy as well as in Poland, the opponent is seen through a political lens. This can happen in two different ways: when the responsibility for the workers' situation is identified as lying with the government rather than with the employer, or when the employer is imputed to have a political will. The latter variant appears almost exclusively in the most radical unions (*Popieluszko*, Cobas), while

opposition to the government is also expressed by other unions in Mirafiori and Warsaw. In the Solidarity case, however, the opposition to communism kept alive by the national leadership has been largely abandoned on the shop floor, for instance allowing some OPZZ-Solidarity cooperation at *Huta Warszawa*. Solidarity's opposition to the communists has a moral rather than a political nature: they must be fought because they are 'guilty' rather than because their policies are dangerous. On political issues the adversary, if any, is identified as the liberal Union of Freedom (coalition partner of Solidarity after 1997) more than as the post communist party.

Finally, there are isolated cases where the opponent is identified in different, specific ways: the leisure organisation, the welfare state institutions, the other gender. These rare cases do not undermine the general impression of an opposition which is either generic or class/work related.

2.4. Totality

2.4.1. The ambiguity of political and social struggles

The totality principle is usually defined as what is at 'stake' in taking action, but it cannot be reduced to the mere 'goals' of social actors. It could better be defined as a ground of confrontation implying a certain 'counter project', an alternative idea of how an issue should be treated. For instance, a demand for a salary increase (which seems the simplest form of union action, but is actually the most difficult to analyse) does not display an economic totality principle unless it relies on a general idea, even if embryonic, of how economic relations should be organised. This may be, for instance, according to the idea of basic social rights, or to general moral values, or to an idea of exploitation based on the link between salary and product, or on market arguments, or still otherwise.

On the totality principle variation in the interviews is slightly lower than on opposition and especially identity (Table 5).

Table 5

| Totality principle | politics | economic | collective bargaining | social | work | class | employment | extrawork |
|---|----------|----------|-----------------------|---------|---------|-------|------------|-----------|
| Fiat Bielsko Solidarność N: 9 | 7 -2 | 6 | 4 -1 | 4 -3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Fiat Tychy Sierpień 80+Federacja N: 14 | 2 -8 | 7 | 1 -1 | 1 | 4 | 1 | - | 3 -1 |
| Fiat Tychy Popieluszko N: 2 | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Fiat Tychy Metalowcy N: 3 | 1 -2 | 2 | - | 1 | - | - | - | - |
| Huta Lucchini Solidarność+Hutnicy N: 11 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 9 -1 | -1 | - | - |
| Fiat Mirafiori Fiom N: 9 | 3 -1 | 3 -1 | -1 | 2 -1 | 4 -2 | 2 | - | - |
| Fiat Mirafiori Cobas N: 6 | 2 -2 | 2 | - | -1 | 4 -1 | 1 | - | - |
| Fiat Rivalta Fiom N: 8 | 3 -4 | 1 -1 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Fiat Rivalta Fim+Uilm N: 10 | 1 -5 | -1 | 4 | 2 -1 | 2 | - | 1 | 4 |
| Lusid Piombino Fiom+Cobas N: 16 | 7 -2 | 1 -6 | 1 | 5 | 3 -2 | 1 | 8 | - |
| Siderco Piombino Fiom+Fim N: 3 | 1 -1 | 1 | - | 1 | - | - | 1 | - |

The definition of the 'confrontation ground' cannot be interpreted in a straightforward manner. This can be seen in cases where action has a *political* stake, very frequent in politicised unions such as the Italian and Polish ones. Interview data offer important information on the actual meaning of propositions. For instance, in the interviews carried out in Piombino in autumn 1997, the topic of the 'welfare state' often appeared spontaneously, and initially seemed an indicator of political involvement. Since the interviewees did not specify what they meant by the welfare state, they were asked what actually did matter in welfare state reform, and the answer was clear-cut: pensions, and more precisely retirement age. The term 'welfare state', newly arrived in the Italian language, was then a euphemistic synonym for 'pension

system', and had to be interpreted purely as a social benefits issue rather than as a political one. This is why it is best to distinguish 'political' from 'social' (in the sense of social benefits) goals. Another example of ambiguous political statements comes from Rivalta. The frequent uneasiness of Fiom activists from that plant about the political goals of the trade unions sheds a new light on the 'autonomy' claim of the Fiom Congress which took place at the same time (see Fiom-Cgil 1996). Most observers interpreted this claim as representing a radical left-wing standpoint. However, from the interviewees' words it appears that they refused any political *concertazione* not because they were *left-wing*, but because they were *metalworkers*. Rather than autonomy from political parties, the activists were demanding autonomy from politics, and a return to professional (possibly corporatist) matters. Again, in spite of the language, a political 'totality' is absent.

On the 'political' totality principle it must be noted that, although politics are a recurrent topic during the interviews, political action is widely rejected in those unions which are most engaged in work matters, such as the Rivalta Fiom and Tychy *Sierpień* 80. This point suggests that work conflict has lost its 'general', societal character.

The *economic* 'totality' principle is also very frequent. It could be expected as a constant from trade union activists, since trade unions are considered to be 'interest' associations whose main task is salary negotiation. However, there are situations where economic claims are secondary. In Italy not only are economic issues in many interviews absent or marginal, but some interviewees (especially in Piombino) even deny that salaries are an important concern for the trade unions or for the workers themselves. This finding, in that it contrasts with 'common knowledge', is particularly important.

In Piombino people earn decently, it's not that they don't earn, in addition to the fact that they don't go on holiday, that they're always inside, damn, it's not that... [pf2]

As regards salary, the national contract is favourably viewed, our [new employees] contract can raise some problems, but we're almost all young and one and a half million is enough for us, later on with the professional career that they'll want us to have, and wishing to live on our own, we'll reconsider it. [pf5]

Before [the union] was concerned only with raising salaries, which for me is a very negative thing, it's fruitless, you raise salaries, after that prices increase and nothing changes. [ri4]

Such statements could be interpreted as insincere, the interviewees wishing to appear as altruistic in front of the researcher. In any case, the difference between Italian and Polish activists in this regard is so remarkable that it will be examined in greater depth in the next chapter.

In the cases of the most institutionalised and professional trade unions (in Rivalta and Warsaw) the duty of the union is often seen as just *collective bargaining*, that is in the institutional role of negotiating. Working for the union means being in an intermediary position between the workforce and the employer. The procedural goal of participation in decision-making is seen as more important than 'material' ones. This goal, however, requires a relatively long time-horizon; in situations of uncertainty, like in Bielsko-Biała, it betrays a hesitation about more concrete goals.

The *social* goals, already mentioned in the Piombino case, are social benefits not directly linked to the work activity. Social activity was very important for the official unions under real socialism, and this legacy is often seen as an enduring peculiarity of Eastern European unions. The Italy-Poland comparison, however, does not reveal any significant difference in the occurrence of social concerns. An important exception are the post-communist unions, not so much because of their orientations (they also often embrace a market ideology), but because, for organisational reasons, they tend to include retired workers in the company unions. As a consequence, for instance, they claim that retired workers should be entitled to use the company health-care service, which is clearly unacceptable for the employer.

2.4.2. Work and class: still the battlefield?

As in the identity and opposition cases, it is important to distinguish class and work concepts. *Class* totality indicates that activists see their 'mission' as being to take part in a general conflict about the social resources involved in industrial production (even if they are not necessarily clear about who are the actors involved, as is indicated by the Identity and Opposition principles.)

As regards technologies there have been enormous steps forward, but the technologies offered by science become a possession of whoever owns them, and a company which beforehand employed many workers can now send 1/3 of them home. These technologies should be a possession of the society. {rf2}

In 1980 Fiat found itself in difficulties, not because of any fault on the part of the workers but because Fiat had not carried out its research properly (...). We know very well that when a company makes large investments, this is not to increase the number of jobs but to reduce them, because workers are displaced by technology (...). The task of the company is to make profits, ours is to create jobs. [mf4]

Work totality is a more restricted stake, centred on work organisation. This is, however, a more elaborate concept than a simple criticism or mistrust of employer's choices (work opposition), since it implies an alternative view of the issue. Following the theoretical framework drawn up in the previous chapter, work totality is an important component of class consciousness.

One day I pointed out to the foreman that unfortunately we were into supplementary work time, and asked if he would write it down, in the schedule or somewhere. And a mess, as we say, came out, and the director was implicated, he called the team together and pointing at me said that I was quarrelsome. [ta7]

The problem of working conditions originates in the policy of making savings and it's in this framework that they reduce security. This is not a clever policy because afterward come the losses. [hs2]

Work here is not rejected by the unions: it is taken as an objective, something the control of which must be attained. In Solidarity this objective was also present in the past, not only in the thousands of collective agreements signed in varied plants in 1980-81, but also for instance in the frequent statement that Solidarity action at that time *absolutely* did not cause productive losses (the official statistics show the opposite).

However, the work control unions managed to exert in the past has been hurt by reorganisation in the labour process as well as in the industrial relations system. In Italy, the creation in 1993 of the *Rappresentanze Sindacali Unitarie* (RSU) in the place of the old works councils democratised and rationalised the bargaining capacity of the unions (although one third of the representatives is not democratically elected, but reserved to the most important organisations). At the workshop level, however, there were collateral effects which ultimately undermined union control on the work process: the number of *delegati* was drastically reduced, and the new *delegati RSU*, being elected by all the workforce in general elections, no longer represent a particular workshop or 'homogenous group'. As a consequence, the workers no longer have their own, visible representative who can be approached with the day-to-day problems of the workshop. The same bewilderment stems from work organisation change.

I remember that we were able to take the initiative with our proposals for the *inquadramento unico* [a common grading system, or 'single status', for all categories of employee - an important issue in the early '70s] (...), but now we lack a proper grasp of what is going on in the factory, we may have information, but we don't know how to make sense of it. [mf2]

Today the foreman is used to really commanding, he commands without trouble because the workers no longer have specific tasks, you must do whatever they ask you, therefore it's easier for the foreman to command. For us this is a big problem, you don't know any longer when you can say no, you can't refuse any longer, you must do everything. And this conception has prevailed, they imposed it, the union now has accepted it, the people are completely at the foreman's mercy. Beforehand in the workshop before breaching the rules they were very attentive. There were well-established rules, and if there was an exception they came to ask for it as a favour. They said 'this is an exceptional thing, if you might make a certain intervention, please', they came very delicately to ask, knowing that it was an extra. Now they don't, it is an obligation, you must do everything, therefore they don't see the problem. [pf9]

These organisational changes occur against the background of a general decay of work centrality for the unions. Counter-trends against class and work totality appear.

We haven't any influence on production. We make claims only when problems appear, after. We can't regulate anything, why should we? What the point in that? Only once it is written in black and white, will we deal with it. Otherwise it would turn against us. For now, we drudge. [hs4]

The Piombino case must be taken separately – it is necessary to distinguish between 'work' and 'employment'. As already illustrated in the sections on opposition and identity, AFP workers were for a long time involved in the control of tasks and recruitment, and not with production issues as in the Fiat case. The control of recruitment was not limited to obliging the company to employ through the local employment office (*collocamento*), but also had an informal nature, as non-directive interviews reveal. This informal power is now undermined but still existing, as the following extracts from respectively a young and an elderly worker tell.

In the union... I can tell you frankly what it's like. I was hired with the first groups, and the union had its finger in the pie, because I didn't do it personally, but the fact is that my dad worked, he worked for 35 years in the steelworks, and he had a good relationship with the union. And anyway, he went to find out if they were hiring or not, and how to write the application, and I don't know how I was hired in the steelworks. With the union I felt the duty of joining it at once, because it is a family tradition and because, in one way or another, they were, I believe, those who got me into the steelworks. [pf5]

The company recruited carefully, picking all these workers with a diploma, new forces, young, new ideas. But these young ones went the wrong way, through management, it would have been better if they hadn't, or at least they should have been led by the union. [pf12]

Finally, there are cases where the goals of the unions are not linked to work (*extrawork* totality). This happens most frequently in Rivalta, where paradoxically the unions have achieved relatively high power at work.

2.5. Assessment: the manifold meanings of unionism

To recapitulate, if working class consciousness is to be considered a complex construct requiring (1) a coherence among the three I-O-T components and (2) a link to work, then it rarely appears in the interview materials. The talks show rather a situation of diversity and disconnection. Elements of this construct do appear here and there: the features of the worker movement are well-known to the actors, the Polish ones included. However, there is no coherence in the current experience of work. If anywhere, 'class' is located in the past rather than in the present, or outside work rather than inside. If in the past the unions were embedded in a basic cultural environment which was essentially homogeneous as to the meanings given to work, family, and relations (Carbognin and Paganelli 1981; Latoszek 1991), today's reality recounted by the interviewees is different.

At the level of action, the decline of class appears in the tales of individual (no solidarity-based) slow-down practices in contrast with the collective ones of the past. In some interviews, the actors themselves are aware of this decline (demonstrating the overlapping of sociological and common knowledge).

Nevertheless, the most thorough representation of class decline is given by the application of the I-O-T triangle. With its help, we can graphically display the different 'consciousnesses' which emerge from the interviews (Figure 1).

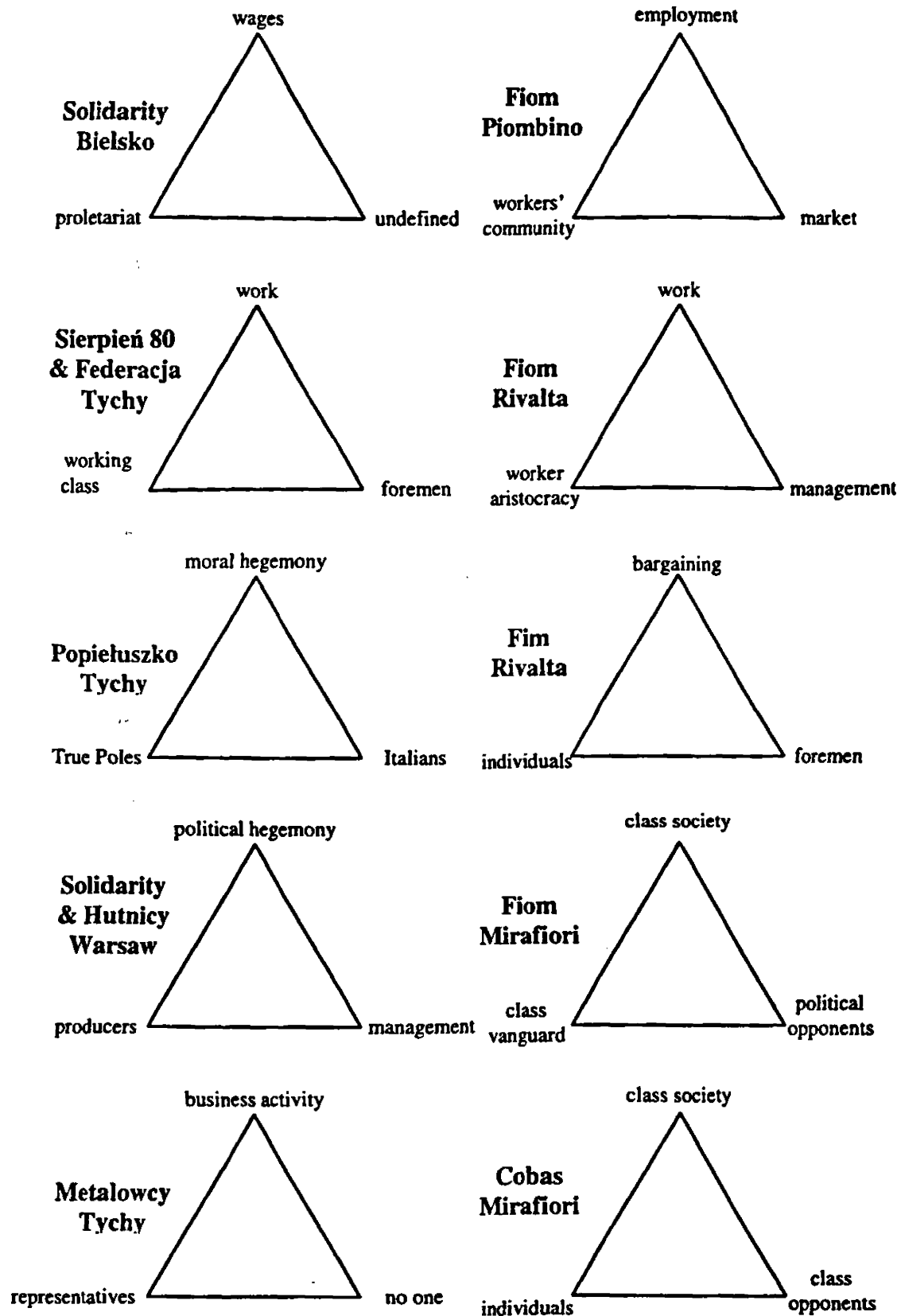
A wide differentiation takes place. Its forms are more disparate in Poland than in Italy (and in the next chapter we will try to understand why), but in Italy neither any coherent model resists. Important differences emerge even between Rivalta and Mirafiori, which no institutional or structural variable can explain.⁴³

There are unions which are close to consciousness, but they also lack something. Mirafiori Cobas workers lack a class identity, while their Fiom colleagues also lack a coherent vision of their opponent. Rivalta Fiom has an identity narrower than a class one (they display only the 'strong' side), and by contrast the Warsaw unions locate the stake (totality) at too high a level, away from employees' experience.

Rivalta Fim, Bielsko Solidarity, *Popieluszko*, *Metalowcy*, and the Piombino unions are even further away from class consciousness. Only in the radical unions in Tychy, and to a lesser extent in the above-mentioned Rivalta Fiom, does the triangle approach class consciousness. However, in Tychy there is a complete lack of political interest outside the factory gates: the 'general' character of work conflict is no longer clear.

On the background of differentiation and disintegration, the residual references to the working class can still become occasionally operative, especially in Poland in the moments of organisational change. This is a first finding: in Poland, unlike in other post-totalitarian societies, the working-class tradition can, in some cases, produce workers' strong collective action. However, – and this is the second important finding – these working-class reactions are very unlikely to produce a long-term and widespread class movement: differentiation and contradictions in consciousness are too high. If unions still ever aspire to a role of social movement, they need to develop more subtle identities, which I shall discuss in the last chapter. Rivalta unions and Mirafiori Cobas are already undertaking the first steps in this direction.

Figure 1 - Consciousness configurations



3. The constants of disintegration

The previous section revealed a fragmentation in class consciousness which with some rare exceptions takes similar forms in Italy and Poland. Two theoretical problems remain. First, it is necessary to account for the exceptions where a sort of worker movement seems to be still alive (Sierpień 80, Rivalta Fiom, Mirafiori Cobas). Secondly, there is the question of whether this fragmentation is the outcome of a general process occurring in Italy and Poland, or whether it is of an accidental nature. In order to find answers to these problems, it is necessary to look in more depth at the reference points and the arguments used by trade union activists.

In the interviews with workers, many 'taken-for-granted' arguments are recurrent. Some of them, rather than describing a particular reality, express a subjective feeling of distance from class action. They reveal that the activists, even when they declare some sort of class objectives, are pessimist about the likelihood of their being achieved. Among these arguments, six main cross-plant currents ('constants') of disintegration were found. These are ways of constructing value oppositions that reveal a discomfort with the current situation of the union: the positive references concern the past or other situations, the negative reference refers to the present. They are all, directly or indirectly, linked to time, and therefore suggest that class was more relevant in the past than in the present. Their frequencies are presented in Table 6 and their meaning will be explained directly.

'*Nostalgia*' is present in a direct past-present contrast about union action: action in the past is remembered as positive in contrast to current activities. It is frequent in Solidarity and in Italy, but is significantly absent in the radical unions operating in the Polish Fiat factories, which are involved in a current, new conflict following the Fiat take-over rather than in the memory of the past.

'*Withdrawal*' embraces different kinds of 'corporatist' retreat into smaller interest groups than the working class. New narrower social identities and interests are expressed. This pattern has been the rarest among the six 'constants' selected, which shows how union ideology is after all enduring at least as a self-censorship factor. Significantly, however, 'withdrawal' is very strong in Mirafiori, where class discourse is more frequent at an ideological level but workers have negative views of other

categories, and especially of state-sector employees who are seen as 'parasites'. In the other Italian Fiat plant, Rivalta, the absence of open 'corporatist' statements seems to be, rather than an indicator of openness, the consequence of a complete, coherent and rather successful focus on workshop issues. Nevertheless, a peculiar 'withdrawal' appears in both Mirafiori and Rivalta in the form of a rivalry among the two plants. To a lesser extent, this happens also between Bielsko-Biala and Tychy.

'*Generation break*' is very important since it is time-related and reveals nostalgia in situations where this is self-censored. Implicitly, it expresses a gap between the current situation, represented by the 'young workers', and the previous one, represented by their senior colleagues. This opposition is central in the Piombino steelworks, a closed community not used to dealing with differences of any kind (of skills, culture, gender or age). It is expressed through reciprocal negative attitudes by young and elderly workers, and is related to the fact that in both countries young workers are less unionised than the average. It is particularly interesting that young workers are charged with working 'too much', rather than 'not enough' as general social stereotypes would suggest. This criticism is directly linked to class decline: young workers are accused of breaking the old, firmly-established slow-down practices.

Similar standpoints were found in the Warsaw steelworks, especially in the *Hutnicy* union. The generation break is also present in Rivalta, in the Fim-Cisl, but more in the form of young workers' criticism of the previous generation. This is one of the cases where the elements of disintegration themselves can turn out to be resources for a cultural reformulation of trade union commitment, in a move from class to the individual; this point will be discussed further in chapter 5. In the case of Rivalta Fiom, on the other hand, this disintegration element is rare, probably as a consequence of ideological self-censorship. In fact, the members of the competing Fim say about their Fiom colleagues:⁴⁴

I see in the Fiom there are always four of them going around, they're always old, I don't see any young people, even those who tried to enter... nothing, if you enter you stay apart, you must obey, you know, this is unacceptable for me, I don't obey anybody. [118]

'*Organisation mistrust*' is a very important factor since it contrasts with the traditional compactness of trade unions in comparison with other mass associations

(especially political parties, which since their beginnings have been subject to Michels' 'iron law of oligarchy'). It consists of a fear of bureaucratisation, which has been seen as a growing menace in recent times. This current of disintegration takes surprisingly similar forms in Italy and Poland. For instance, in both countries it is expressed via an opposition towards the regional executives of the trade unions, despite strong political and media campaigns supporting regionalism, decentralisation and federalism. A particular case is that of 'split' unions, like *Sierpień 80*, *Popieluszko*, and *Cobas*. In these 'militant' organisations, involved in strenuous competition with the 'mother' unions, there is strong criticism of the latter (usually seen as undemocratic and/or corrupted), accompanied by some self-justification as regards the speaker's own group. In this case it is particularly difficult to distinguish social attitudes from polemical arguments. Sometimes, however, the criticism of other unions takes the form of a general disappointment with unionism as a whole. It is in these cases that organisational criticism was coded as a disintegration principle.

The fifth current of disintegration is a feeling of *social degrading*, according to which workers today occupy a *lower* and/or *less central* position in society than they did in the past. The best definition is given by a Fim activist: 'the real poor *today* are the workers' [r11], a definition which associates today's worker with yesterday's poor and thereby creates a discontinuity in time. Although it is widespread in both countries, this feeling takes more definite forms in Poland. This is linked to the peculiarity of the transition experience and not to a real trend in income: Polish workers' income in the last years actually surpassed the levels of the '80s. These points will be more broadly discussed in chapter 4.

Finally, an important point in the case of collective action is a sense of *isolation*, contrasting with the solidarity link typical of class consciousness. This current too takes similar forms in both countries. On both sides, for instance, activists fear that if trade union membership were based on spontaneous declarations, the membership rate would drastically fall.⁴⁵

Table 6

| Disintegration indicator | nostalgia | withdrawal | generation break | organisation mistrust | social degrading | isolation |
|--|-----------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|------------------|-----------|
| Fiat Bielsko Solidarność N: 9 | 6 | 4 | 3 -1 | 4 | 3 | 5 |
| Fiat Tychy Sierpień 80 N: 11 | - | 1 | -1 | - | 7 | -1 |
| Fiat Tychy Federacja N: 3 | - | - | 1 -3 | 1 | - | 2 |
| Fiat Tychy Popieluszko N: 2 | - | - | 1 | - | - | - |
| Fiat Tychy Metalowcy N: 3 | - | - | - | - | 3 | 1 |
| Huta Lucchini Solidarność+Hutnicy N: 11 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Fiat Mirafiori Fiom N: 9 | 6 | 4 | 2 | 6 | 5 | 5 -1 |
| Fiat Mirafiori Cobas N: 6 | 1 | - | 3 -2 | 3 | 1 | 3 |
| Fiat Rivalta Fiom N: 8 | 4 | - | 2 | 3 | 3 | 6 |
| Fiat Rivalta Fim+Uilm N: 10 | 4 | 1 | - | 4 | 4 | 6 |
| Lusid Piombino Fiom+Cobas N: 16 | 10 | - | 11 -1 | 5 | 11 | 6 |
| Siderco Piombino Fiom + Fim N: 3 | 1 | - | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |

To conclude, in all plants the activists, through these recurrent taken-for-granted statements, disclose to some extent the disintegration of the labour movement. The only significant exception which remains is that of *Sierpień 80* in Tychy, while Rivalta Fiom does not come out very well from the analysis of disintegration constants (isolation, organisational mistrust, and nostalgia are widespread amongst its activists). Mirafiori Cobas are a relatively simple case. Their class consciousness is in any case incomplete (individual rather than collective identities, and a rather weak link to work), and their optimism can be explained by their recent foundation and their

radicalism. This union is profoundly different from the pessimist and defensive Cobas of Piombino,⁴⁶ and represents (like Rivalta Fim) new emerging forms of unionism rather than a new edition of the past.

In the 'disintegration constants' analysis it is useful to distinguish between *Sierpień 80* and *Federacja*, which in the other respects are very similar. In fact, the activists of *Federacja* – a new, small split with still the problem of being recognised – are particularly uncertain. Consequently, the disintegration constants (especially the 'isolation' one) appear more frequently for reasons which are probably due to a temporary 'crisis of institutionalisation'. By contrast, in *Sierpień 80* class consciousness endures, and this requires a more detailed explanation.

Sierpień 80 has maintained the principal elements of what is defined as a workers' movement. The working class consciousness is lively, almost 'wild', not yet institutionalised. First of all, it is rooted in the social relations of production and associates both 'proletarian' and 'proud' sides (Touraine, Dubet and Wieviorka 1984). There is also a mix of typical cultural orientations such as productivity, egalitarianism, moralism, militantism, and, less praiseworthy, some 'machismo' which can be found, in vulgar forms, even in the union bulletin. Moreover, all these elements are very spontaneous and vivacious. It is neither a simple case of the desperate defence of a workers' community (the town of Tychy is not one), nor nostalgia as in Mirafiori Fiom: examples given in workers' talks are very recent. The 'constants of disintegration' are absent, except for social degrading which is here a part of the 'proletarian' side of class consciousness. The only, albeit fundamental, problem is the inability to conceive of a political level of action, and the deep disorientation which arises when the field of the factory is quitted.

The three components of class consciousness are visible in *Sierpień 80* and the *Federacja*: organisation of work is what is at stake, the employer is seen in economic and class terms, and identity is based on both work and poverty.

How is this possible? Their recent history indicates that the intensity of work conflict in the Tychy plant allows actors to keep a form of class consciousness alive, although it is not sufficient to develop a political expression. Fiat assembly lines in Poland and Italy are comparable from the technological point of view, but they are

still different with respect to organisation. In Poland, Fiat waited until 1996-97 before introducing 'Japanese' work organisation, believing that a phase of taylorism, however brief, would 'teach workers a lesson' and break the former system of co-management. This implies strong differences between the two national groups in the experience of work, and partially explains the existence in Tychy of an 'industrial niche' for the labour movement. The introduction of taylorism (which occurred at Fiat in the early '90s replacing the previous 'arhythmic taylorism') is particularly important for workers' consciousness:

La conscience de classe n'est nulle part aussi forte qu'au moment du passage, du retournement qui conduit d'un type de travail à un autre. (Touraine 1966: 118)

What is happening in Poland may be compared to what had happened in Italy about thirty years earlier. At Fiat in Turin the Fordist model and the scientific organisation of work were fully implemented (after partial attempts before World War II) in the '50s and the '60s. The tightening of the hierarchical structure and the deterioration of work conditions caused by that organisational change eventually brought about the turmoil of the '70s (Musso 1995).

Nowadays, it can be argued that in the turbulence of transition there is a lot of space for local 'countertrends', which can be important but which do not change general trends. So, although Poland is moving towards a post-industrial pattern, there may be reactions which refer back to the worker movement tradition. The worker movement, however, unlike in the previous period is unlikely to emerge as a central social actor. This is confirmed by the Tychy activists' feeling of loneliness. In their case, at the end of the century, a discontinuity between the experience of work and societal experience appears, thus putting into question the sociological idea of the company as '*une affaire de société*' (Sainsaulieu 1990). Activists are self-confident about work matters, but disoriented about the use of democracy. This leaves some open space for nostalgia for the old regime, even if these activists were the most militant wing of Solidarity in 1980-81. The logical consequence of this bewilderment are nationalist temptations similar to, although weaker than, those of Solidarity and *Popieluszko*.

For the rest, the analysis presented in this chapter, by showing the incompleteness of the I-O-T schemes and the diffusion of disintegration constants,

confirms the hypothesis that Polish and Italian unions are undergoing the same decline in class consciousness. The work conflict situation was in the past the basic source of trade union consciousness, but it has lost its meaning. The decline in class consciousness lets differences emerge between unions and factories. This has a paradoxical aspect in a period when globalization, European integration and the end of ideologies (even of history according to some) should be making industrial relations more uniform around the world: general processes and pressures are the same, but outcomes increasingly different. In this evolution lies the 'paradox' of the Italo-Polish parallelism: the two countries can appear so different precisely because in both the same process is taking place. The unity of industrial society can be found only in tales about the past, when Italian and Polish unions could even cooperate; on current affairs, by contrast, everyone underlines the specificity of their own situation.

After having tested this parallelism, the next chapter will deal with the differences which emerge between Polish and Italian trade unions, and test the hypothesis of a dualisation process. Finally, the 5th chapter will be devoted to the consequences and perspectives for the trade unions.

¹ In his best-seller on the diversity of capitalisms, Michel Albert writes about Italy:

[Le modèle économique] de l'Italie, dominé par le capitalisme familial, la faiblesse de l'État, un énorme déficit des finances publiques et une étonnante vitalité des PME, ne se compare à aucun autre, si ce n'est peut-être au modèle des Chinois de la diaspora (Albert 1991: 24).

² On Fiat as a kind of anomalous seismograph of the Italian situation, good points are made by Giugni (1987), Accornero (1988), and Berta (1993). The Lucchini factories are more rarely in the headlines, although the personality of Luigi Lucchini (former president of the Italian employers' association) draws some attention.

³ On the history of Mirafiori, the best recent reconstructions are Berta (1998a), Bonazzi (1991), Olmo (1997). On the history of Fiat more generally, see among others Revelli (1989), Berta (1993), Volpato (1996), Gianotti (1999), Musso (1999), and the monumental '*Fiat 1899-1999. Un secolo di storia italiana*' by Castronovo (1999). The relevance of Fiat for the Italian labour movement also explains the attention of non-Italian scholars (e.g. Freyssinet 1979; Sabel 1982; Rollier 1986; Golden 1990a; Mehl 1993).

⁴ The period is recounted in detail by the protagonists (Garavini and Pugno 1975). For an historical analysis see Berta (1998b).

⁵ On the *autunno caldo* and the '70s in the Fiat plants the collections of interview materials with union militants are particularly useful for this research and allow a degree of cross-time comparison (Aglieta, Bianchi and Merli Brandini 1970; Totò 1981; Polo 1989). Useful sources are also the accounts from discussion and focus-groups (Briante, Oddone and Re 1977; Girardi 1980). In the analysis of this material the specific ideological and political framework must be held in due consideration. An example of the careful attention given by the unions to the control of production at Fiat is available in a research on the engine plant of Mirafiori organised by the plant unions (Bronzino, Germanetto and Guidi 1974).

⁶ The importance of this event is confirmed by the large amount of literature on it (among others: Baldissera 1988; Bonazzi 1984; Perotti and Revelli 1987; Manghi 1987; Galli and Pertegato 1994).

⁷ Which could not be stronger if one limits oneself to the analysis of two books of interviews with Fiat managers published just before and just after this change (Degiacomi 1987; Annibaldi 1994).

⁸ In 1997 the RSU (*Rappresentanze Sindacali Unitarie*, Unitary Union Representatives) elections at Mirafiori (without considering the central offices) gave the following results: Fiom 33.5%, Fismic 20.5%, Uilm 17.6%, Fim 16.7%, Cobas 5.6%, Ugl 5.2%, Cisl 0.9%.

⁹ In 1997 the RSU elections in the body plant and the presses shop gave the following results: Fiom 44.3%, Fismic 21.8%, Fim 15.3%, Uilm 14%, Cisl 2.7%, Ugl 1.2%, Cobas 0.8%.

¹⁰ First of all, the newly employed do not receive 300,000 L. per month of '*emolumento siderurgico*', obtained in 1989 by the state-sector steelworkers. In total, the wage gap between a young and an old worker in the same position at Lusid may reach the 700-800,000 L. per month. In addition, job security is much lower for the young employees due to the specific *contratti di formazione e lavoro* (contracts of training and work).

¹¹ The 1997 RSU elections gave the following results among manual workers: Fiom 40.2%, Fim 23.7%, Uilm 19.5%, Cobas 16.6%. The Cobas started for the first time and originated from a Fiom split. For the first time in history Fiom lost its absolute majority.

¹² The unions as organisations, however, in 1998 showed notable courage by demanding the cokery displacement.

¹³ *Solidarność 80* was founded in 1989, in opposition to the Round Table negotiations, by Marian Jurczyk, the Solidarity leader in Stettin and Wałęsa's adversary. The union, even if never exceeding 200,000 members, quickly gained importance between 1991 and 1993, leading many protests in strategic companies, especially in Southern Poland (e.g. many Silesian mines and the Cracow steelworks 'Huta im. T. Sandzimir'). After that period, however, the union was broken up by internal rivalries and splits. Jurczyk created the '*National Solidarity 80*' and was elected mayor of Szczecin in 1998. Today, some factions side with the extreme right, whereas others support the left-wing party Labour Union.

¹⁴ I infer this rationale from conversations with Fiat top managers I had in 1995 and 1996. A supplementary reason was the lack of preparation of the foremen.

¹⁵ They are: three variations of the former official unions – Metalworkers (*Metalowcy*), Solidarity, Solidarity 80 (radical split of Solidarity in 1990), August 80 (*Sierpień 80*, a radical split from Solidarity 80 in 1993), Popiełuszko (radical, right-wing split from Solidarity in 1997), Workers' Federation of the Tychy Fiat Plant (*Federacja*, a radical split from *Sierpień 80* in the assembly line workshop in Tychy in 1997), and two unions of engineers and technicians. The Polish law on trade unions is an incentive to unions' fragmentation (ten people in a plant are sufficient to create a union, and each union is given separately a number of rights) and there are companies with as many as seventeen different unions. Nevertheless, such a sequence of splits in Solidarity as in Tychy is unique.

¹⁶ The *Popiełuszko* union was created in 1992 by Seweryn Jaworski, the Solidarity (and then Solidarity 80) leader in the *Huta Warszawa*, but at the national level is today almost non-existent. It is characterised by extremist nationalist and Catholic orientations. In the Tychy case, it is close to right-wing organisations, although its birth in the Fiat plant seems largely due to local antagonisms with Solidarity of the Bielsko-Biała plant.

¹⁷ From summer 1998 through May 1999 small groups of traditionalist Catholics and nationalists demonstrated in Auschwitz (10km away from the Fiat plant in Tychy) against the removal of a cross from the area of the concentration camp. The demonstration, which was of an openly anti-Semitic character, was led by Kazimierz Świtoń, one of the founders of the free trade unions of the '70s (*Wolne Związki Zawodowe*). I have observed and recounted this controversy elsewhere (Meardi 1998a).

¹⁸ This element confirms that today, especially in Eastern Europe, strike hours statistics are a very misleading indicator of work conflict.

¹⁹ The concentration of engine production together with the 'dispersion' of body construction allows the producers to achieve better economies of scale, tighter links to the market outlets, and the avoidance of tariffs.

²⁰ To my knowledge – having spoken with union activists, sociologists, and journalists – I was the first and last observer allowed to visit the Fiat plants of Bielsko-Biała and Tychy. In 1998 the

possibility of a new permission was suggested under the condition of limiting the inquiry to certain trade unions, which was obviously unacceptable.

²¹ Revealing, and paradoxical, are the remarks of a researcher who found herself in the opposite situation. Ruth Milkman, in the course of a similar inquiry on a General Motors factory, received the collaboration of the company and the unions: 'For some potential informants – most of all, rank-and-file workers – the very fact that we had legitimacy with management and union rendered us eminently untrustworthy. In the intensely political world of the factory, academic researchers were an entirely unknown quantity and could only be understood as serving someone else's immediate interests' (Milkman 1997:192).

²² Again, the remarks of Ruth Milkman also make sense in the light of my own experience: '[interviews with more than one person] turned out to be among the best interviews, since they developed a group dynamic in which my presence often became marginal (...). I came to feel that these interviews constituted the most valuable data I was able to obtain' (Milkman 1997: 198-9).

²³ Belief universes have not to do only with the imaginary in a strict sense. They can be more rigorously defined as '*ensembles de propositions associées aux catégories-clés des récits et tenues pour vraies compte tenu des analyses logiques les plus élémentaires*' (Martin 1987).

²⁴ The interviews are coded in the following way. The first letter indicates the plant (b: Bielsko; t: Tychy; h: Huta Warszawa; p: Piombino; r: Rivalta; m: Mirafiori; s: Siderco). The second letter indicates the trade union (s: Solidarity; a: August 80 (*Sierpień 80*); m: *Metalowcy*, including *Hutnicy*; p: *Popieluszeko*; z: *Federacja*; f: *Fiom*; i: *Fim*; u: *Uilm*; c: *Cobas*). The number indicates the order of observation.

²⁵ There are in fact marginal exceptions of youth movements based on a collective view of history, the most important example being the *Liga Republikańska*. In the workplaces, however, the historical discourse meets little interest.

²⁶ The 'ethics of Solidarity' have been philosophically analysed and popularised by an intellectual close to the movement, Father Józef Tischner (1981; 1992).

²⁷ The best case to use in explaining the difference between identity and consciousness is that of racist groups. Although they usually have a strong and sometimes elaborate identity, they never achieve a coherent consciousness because their logic lies in 'avoiding' social relations (even of conflict) and not in engaging in them. Therefore, they may be better defined as 'antisocial movements' rather than as 'social movements' (Wieviorka 1991).

²⁸ Pizzorno's definition of solidarity as a system of action is one of the most precise in political sociology. It still refers to a *determined collectivity* (Pizzorno 1966: 254) and therefore matches more with the concept of solidarity-cohesion than with that of solidarity-altruism.

²⁹ 5 interviews display all 3 patterns, 4 interviews display 2 of them, and only 3 display one isolated pattern.

³⁰ All four interviews with the work element also display the class one: work is included in the class identity rather than being an autonomous principle. 4 out of 8 cases with the class element display also the historical one.

³¹ This extract confirms how on these issues open interview data offer more information than closed questions, since the former reveal the actual meaning of the words. Open, quiet conversation avoids many of the inconveniences stemming from the double system of references used by industrial workers (Parkin 1971), who on explicit, public questions tend to repeat the dominant ideas. In this case, the union member firstly repeats the 'dominant' statement, but while constructing his own discourse starts revealing personal opinions.

³² The same critical remark is made in Piombino about the union renouncing its right to immediately intervene on the hot productions.

³³ These are suggestion boxes, the first step in the introduction of a participative, Japanese-like, organisation model. Results were reasonably positive in Turin (Bonazzi 1993), apparently worse in Tychy.

³⁴ The *kaizen*, one of the pillars of toyotism.

³⁵ The concertation system designed by the tripartite agreements of 1992 and 1993, in spite of important achievements in the moments of deepest crisis, has actually never been implemented as a stable 'social pact'. After the very first period of Italian political and financial emergency (1992-1994) the system was repeatedly disregarded on crucial issues, although at the central level it still produced

two important agreements on the labour market in 1996 and in 1998. To give only the most important examples of the many false steps: in 1994 the Berlusconi government did not negotiate the reform of the pension system with the unions, provoking one of the widest protest movements in the history of the Italian Republic; in 1995 the employers' organisation refused to sign the agreement on pension reform achieved by the unions and the Dini government; in 1996 the same employers refused to apply the 1993 tripartite agreement on the metalworkers' contract, provoking the longest labour dispute on a national contract in the history of Italian industrial relations (40 hours of national industry-wide strike, not including the numerous local strikes); in 1997 the Prodi government called for a revision of the pension reform adopted only two years earlier as a definitive and stabilising measure; a few months later, the same government proposed the reduction of working hours without previously consulting the social partners; in 1998, the employers' organisation explicitly demanded a revision of the bargaining system created in 1993, and the renewal of the metalworkers' contract took place after eight months of dispute and 36 hours of national industry-wide strike; in 1999 the government, for the fourth time in seven years, proposed a global reform of the pension system. If regulation and consensus are the distinguishing features of a 'social pact', this is not the case with the Italian *concertazione*.

For alternative and authoritative views of the recent corporatist 'wave' see Grote and Schmitter (1997) and Crouch (1998).

³⁶ In 1999 the OPZZ, that is officially the largest Polish trade union, even suspended its participation in the Tripartite Commission. This board is now being called by the Left 'unipartite commission', since the main residual participants (employers, government and Solidarity) are all more or less linked to the AWS, the political party created by Solidarity.

³⁷ This is fundamentally the way Pochet (1998) explains the centralisation of the 'social pacts' in countries like Italy, Portugal, Spain, Finland, Ireland and Belgium by the prospect of the EMU.

³⁸ Not only for the new unions, however; German union leaders say that a general strike every five years is salutary for the organisation.

³⁹ Interestingly enough, these feelings are returned by Fiat management. During a meeting in Spring 1999, Fiat Italian managers described *Metalowcy* to me as a very serious and effective organisation, unlike all other unions (apart from the Engineers and Technicians' Trade Union).

⁴⁰ The interview with this *Metalowcy* leader, as with the officers from the other unions, was not recorded and is not included in the analysis. The statement is reported as it was noted.

⁴¹ The ownership form is not always a clear concept in Eastern Europe, even for high-level union officers. In 1996 a national officer of *Metalowcy* told me that in Poland there were no private industrial companies. As I asked about Fiat, he explained me that Fiat was a social company, because the ownership was shared among several shareholders. On the sociological issue of post-communist property forms, see above all Stark (1996).

⁴² Virtually all workers in the AFP are at the 5th or 6th level (the highest in the Italian metalworkers' pay system), while for instance in Fiat almost all are only at the 3rd, and the young workers newly employed by Lucchini Siderurgica, despite better qualifications than their senior colleagues, are only at the 2nd. Of course, work in the automotive sector is generally less skilled than in steel, but the fact that in Piombino all workers were at such a high level can be explained only by political factors.

⁴³ As a matter of fact, the common explanation given in Turin for the gap between Mirafiori and Rivalta is very little sociological: it gives the decisive role to the different local leaderships. Having met and interviewed the leaders supposed to be the 'explanatory variables', I noted that they do not display any characteristic of 'charismatic leadership'.

⁴⁴ Adding heterodefinitions to self-definitions could be seen here as in conflict with phenomenological principles. Nevertheless, it must be noted that the statement mentioned comes from a colleague, and therefore from the same *Lebenswelt*. Phenomenology cannot tell us who is right (the *Fiom* or the *Fim*), but helps to reconstruct the cognitive framework of the actors. All points of view give useful information in this regard.

⁴⁵ In Italy this point became a political issue with the national referendum of 1995 on trade union membership, which revealed the mistrust of the majority of the population of the unions as organisations. The logic of decomposition 'isolation' is then linked to some extent to the 'organisation mistrust' one.

In Poland, the same process became evident in the summer 1998 in a surprising declaration of the Solidarity president Krzaklewski (1998) against the general efficacy of collective agreements: 'It is unfair, that the unionists with their work lose money, in order to improve the conditions of all workers'. By proposing that agreements would apply only to union members, he contravened Solidarity tradition and admitted that the union was isolated in the workplaces. My inquiry showed that Krzaklewski's idea does not go without support on the shop floor.

⁴⁶ Piombino and Turin Cobas do not belong to the same group, following the split of 1996 in the *Cobas* movement. In Mirafiori they belong to the *Rifondazione Comunista*-backing 'Sin-Cobas'. In Piombino, they are associated with the 'Slai-Cobas', closer to the extra-parliamentary Left. For our analysis, however, this political difference proved to be of little significance.

CHAPTER 4

THE MAKING OF A NEW EUROPEAN DIVIDE

'Fossi stato un occidentale, mi avreste giudicato un fenomeno. Noi dell'Est, invece, ci portiamo addosso l'etichetta di indolenti'.
(Zvonimir Boban, Croat player for AC Milan)

1. The Polish 'new proletariat': truth and appearance

1.1 The basic difference between Italian and Polish activists

As we saw in the previous chapter, in both Poland and Italy the elements of crisis, differentiation, and the disintegration of consciousness impede the definition of a unitary model among the trade union activists of Italy and Poland. The classical model of working class consciousness survives only in few, detached elements. Neither have new coherent models yet emerged: the differences *within* the countries are deep. Even inside single factories, with the possible exception of the enduringly working-class *Sierpień 80*, confusion, feelings of decline, and incoherence among the three terms of consciousness prevail. It seems therefore that a general process of disintegration is occurring, challenging the very idea of trade union 'model'.

Nevertheless, we did not simply find a hotchpotch of disparate references. A comprehensive survey of the elements analysed in detail in the previous chapter reveals that in few respects it is possible to clearly distinguish Polish reality from the Italian. At this stage it is still impossible to say whether the differences *between* countries are deeper than those *within*. The task is still that of understanding the nature of these differences.

Table 1 summarises the data for the two countries about the presence (and the rejection) of the various Identity, Opposition and Totality principles in the interviews.

* If I had been a Western, you would have judged me a phenomenon. We from the East, instead, carry the label of indolent (from *Il Corriere della Sera*, 24.2.99).

Since the sample was not statistically representative, the percentages cannot be regarded as referring to the general population of trade union activists. They have only a theoretical relevance in the way they set the findings in order, and point to problems requiring an explanation. For this reason, the data have been treated according to theoretical, and not inferential, principles. Notably, two measures have governed the account. First, the *Metalowcy* workers from Tychy and the activists from the Siderco company were excluded. The former no longer appear to be heirs of the worker movement and are not sufficiently autonomous from the employer; therefore, they lack any *trade union consciousness*, that is, the very object of the comparison.¹ The latter do not have a direct Polish counterpart and cannot be treated in a comparative analysis. The second measure was a *theoretical* weighting: the frequencies were weighted according to the theoretical distinctions among plant-history types (Table 1 in chapter 3). This procedure is not concerned with representativeness: the three history types are not equally distributed in the industry and even less in the workers' and union members' populations. It is simply the case that the theoretical discussion of Italian-Polish differences needed not to be biased by the theoretical distinction between plants. Therefore, each one of the three types has been given the same weight in the construction of the national aggregate regardless of its number of interviewees. The goal is theoretical, not descriptive: testing whether, *keeping the plant types constant*, there are major differences between Italy and Poland.

Accordingly, the most significant ($p < .05$) deviations of the Polish findings from the Italian are:

- a) the higher frequency of the class principle of opposition;
- b) the lower frequency of the employment totality principle;
- c) the higher frequency of the historical and national identity and opposition principles;
- d) the inversion of the weakness and power identity principles, and much higher frequency of economic goals.

Most of these points can be accounted for by *ad hoc* explanations, but a residual of problematic difference remains. Point (a) seems to be due to the recent change in work relations in Poland, which, as described in the previous chapter,

provokes a 'class opposition' reaction. It has to be noted that the class *totality* principle is almost absent and class *identity* is weaker than class *opposition*. Therefore, class action does not emerge as a positively defined project but rather as a form of reject and resistance. Point (b) is due to the peculiar Piombino situation with its high unemployment: the Italian score derives almost entirely from this case. Point (c) is almost self-evident, given recent Polish history and the nationality of the employer.

Table 1 - Summary of the I-O-T principles' configurations

| Identity | politics | work | class | power | weak | history | culture | moral | comm. | nation | indiv. |
|---|----------|-----------|-------|--------|-----------|-----------------------|------------|------------|-------|--------|--------|
| Yes: PL | 7.2 | 39.9 | 38.9 | 8.3 | 57.5** | 31.3 | 7.4 | 14.6 | 7.4 | 10.9* | 14.4 |
| IT | 20.9 | 35.2 | 28.6 | 18.2 | 26.9** | 11.1 | 6.5 | 6.7 | 16.9 | 0.0* | 30.2 |
| No: PL | 0.0 | 17.0 | 11.8 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 3.7 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 2.1* | 0.0 |
| IT | 2.2 | 10.5 | 18.2 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 2.2 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 4.3 | 0.0* | 0.0 |
| Opposition | generic | political | work | class | past work | history | national | extra-work | | | |
| Yes: PL | 59.8 | 10.9 | 47.6 | 52.9** | 28.5 | 28.5* | 39.7** | 0.0* | | | |
| IT | 68.1 | 17.2 | 51.1 | 20.8** | 15.9 | 5.9* | 0.0** | 13.6* | | | |
| No: PL | 17.8 | 9.1 | 14.2 | 3.0** | 13.9 | 7.2* | 9.3** | 0.0 | | | |
| IT | 15.3 | 0.0 | 2.1 | 2.1** | 4.2 | 4.2* | 0.0** | 0.0 | | | |
| Totality | politics | work | class | social | economic | collective bargaining | employment | extra-work | | | |
| Yes: PL | 44.3 | 43.0 | 8.8 | 29.0 | 52.0** | 29.0 | 3.7** | 21.1 | | | |
| IT | 33.1 | 37.0 | 10.6 | 24.5 | 16.9** | 17.3 | 22.2** | 21.3 | | | |
| No: PL | 24.1 | 3.0 | 0.0 | 11.1 | 0.0** | 5.8 | 0.0 | 5.8 | | | |
| IT | 27.5 | 10.8 | 0.0 | 4.1 | 16.6** | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | | | |
| *difference significant at the p<.05 level (Chi squared test). | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **difference significant at the p<.01 level (Chi squared test). | | | | | | | | | | | |

The most striking point, the one which might be taken as the central distinguishing factor between Poland and Italy, is the last one, (d). It seems that the Poles, if compared to the Italians, have a particular feeling of weakness and care about money more than about anything else.

This difference is constant across all factory types and all unions. It had been clearly detected from the very first research steps, taken in Bialsko-Biala and Mirafiori. The problem was not that Polish workers cared about wages; it was that they did not care about anything else. The absence of any positively defined principle of action and the deep sense of impotence were striking. Solidarity activists defined themselves almost solely by reference to their privations: poverty, effort, lack of rights, socio-political weakness. 'The workers will always lose', the Bielsko activists

kept repeating. While taking into account the frequent forms of workers' unrest in the first half of the '90s in Poland (rare traditional strikes after 1992, but numerous hunger strikes, highway marches, occupations, desperate strikes...), it seemed that the Polish unions had fallen from the level of social movement to something more similar to a proletarian revolt. This withdrawal did not mean a return to the past: Polish activists actually seemed in many regards more 'up-to-date' than the Italians, and notably they were questioning their old certainties and references. The withdrawal was a 'social' one: they felt like the 'new proletarians'. Industrial workers, the former pillars of the nation and the victors over communism, were suddenly deprived of their standard of living but above all of their role in politics, in the economy, and in the plants.

The progression of the inquiry suggested that this representation ought to be reappraised. In Tychy and in Warsaw the unions displayed some positive, albeit disparate, references, and at the same time the general evolution of Polish society contradicted the most pessimistic forecasts. However, the differences between the identities of Italian and Polish trade unions persist across the plants, as does the peculiar priority given in Poland to economic issues. Moreover, the different types of consciousness take more odd forms in Poland than in Italy, as it is shown in Figure 1 in chapter 3.

The feeling of weakness is not revealed only by the identity references; also the descriptions of the employer as almost omnipotent also confirm it. Occasionally, the representations even recall those of the master by the slave rather than those of the employer by the employee.

The employer has changed, he is very well organised, we have to learn from him, we have to love the employer, we have to respect what he does. [bs5]

The justifications of unions' claims, in turn, independently from their concrete content, usually do not hide 'proletarian' motives. An example is that of working time. In both countries, the unions propose its reduction and are *definitely* against overtime. In both countries, the activists admit that overtime is for the unions the most difficult matter to control, and in both countries overtime hours are very high. However, the justification for the same formal claim is very different.² In Italy the concern is for unemployment and equality: the unions prefer hiring to overtime, and

do not accept that some plants should work overtime while others are turning to the *cassa integrazione* (wage guarantee fund for temporary lay-offs). In Poland, the motive for working time reduction is the defence of the human body against exploitation and effort. In other words, it is a 'proletarian' demand, which in its arguments recalls the struggle for the 48-hours week undertaken by the worker movement a century before. The representations of work which lie behind the same demand are radically different. Similar considerations emerge from different tales about working life. In both countries, for instance, it was reported that people go to work with a fever for fear of reprisals. However, while in Italy this is described as a scandal ('that we should have come to this'), in Poland the same fact is reported as a natural, almost unavoidable evil, in a fatalistic way.

Similarly, Polish 'economicism' also pervades the interviews, not just appearing in single statements. The Polish economic demands are not important as such: the main task of unions has always and everywhere been bound up with wages. Even the heroic strikes of Summer 1980 had started against a rise in the prices of sausages. At that time, however, as Marciniak's (1990) analysis of strikers' claims reveals, these demands were tightly related to political and moral ones. Now, by contrast, salary demands are worth noting because they are isolated, not supported by other positive references and justification structures (skill, politics or whatever else). Moreover, they are central to the structure of discourse. Many interviews in Poland display a characteristic form of discourse which is almost absolutely absent in Italy: the discourse built around money counting. Interviewees are able to speak at length comparing prices and calculating living costs to demonstrate the inadequacy of salaries. Not only do they claim more money; they also ascribe any other problem, at work as well as outside, to the financial question and to the inadequacy of wages.

The general problem with security and hygiene at work is that there is no money, there is no money, these four words, and with it every problem is closed. [hs8]

Interestingly enough, for management this wage-oriented unionism is not unpleasant. On the contrary, a Fiat manager confessed to me that this is exactly the good side of the Polish unions: they speak only about the important thing (money) and do not waste time interfering with management on other issues.³ In 1996, the management actually exploited this economicism, pushing the unions to sign an

agreement which dismantled the company social fund (jointly administered with the unions) to directly distribute the money to the workers in the form of holiday benefits. From a collective bargaining perspective, however, the concentration on a unique issue makes agreements more difficult, which is what actually happens at Fiat Auto Poland.

In Italy, by contrast, wages are secondary not simply because the activists do not speak at length about them, and when they do, they tend to use 'euphemisms' like 'recognition'.⁴ This might be explained by some kind of cultural difference.⁵ However, the cultural factor can explain only why Italians 'conceal' economic interests or resist market ideology. It does not account for the occasional active rejection of economic demands (in Piombino a few interviewees spontaneously declared that 'wages do not matter, the national agreement is enough') or even less the *behaviour* of some of them. Like the single mother of two children (aged above ten, hence no longer requiring continuous care), interviewed in Mirafiori, who has never worked overtime because 'it makes no sense to work more hours to earn more money' [mf9].

1.2 A proletarian identity in 1999?

It is now necessary to give a definition of this 'proletarian' element which apparently accounts for the most remarkable Polish traits. The word proletarian has become quite old-fashioned, but it is still present in the sociological literature. Its meaning is not universally agreed, and it seems to be traversing a period of change. If one looks at the sociological publications of the last decade using the concept 'proletarian', most of them are either works on the history of sociological thought, or on peripheral countries. That is, the term proletarian seems to have lost its descriptive capability in the most advanced societies but remains a tempting definition for other, 'backward' realities.

It was already mentioned in the first chapter, and it should have been evident from the discussion above, that the term proletarian is not used here with the Marxian meaning. The reference points are rather the history of working class origins (Thompson 1963) and of the lowest strata of the working class (Hoggart 1957), or that sociology able to distinguish different aspects and different groups within the working

class (e.g. Lockwood 1966; Linhart 1978; Dubost 1979; Dubois 1981; Mahnkopf 1985). Useful, and empirically grounded, is the concept of '*proletarische Arbeitshabitus*' (Wittel 1998). This habitus, typical of traditional industrial workers, is based on a complex representation of work as: (1) monetary income; (2) physicality; (3) submission; (4) routine. The first three of these elements characterise the Polish situation much more than the Italian one. However, the wide variation of work representations among the interviewees shows that this 'habitus' is less widespread than argued by Wittel.

The word 'proletarian', as distinguished from 'worker', recalls all the *negative* sides of the working class: weakness on the labour market, poverty, feelings of inferiority, lack of organisation and of projects. A sociological definition should, however, put in order the constituting elements of the concept. Here Touraine's sociology can be a useful starting point. In his study of workers' consciousness he described the 'proletarian' identity as follows.

La conscience d'opposition, isolée des autres éléments constitutifs de la conscience ouvrière, peut être nommée conscience prolétarienne. C'est par une confusion très dangereuse qu'on voit dans cette conscience prolétarienne le ressort de l'action ouvrière. Parce qu'elle est conscience négative de la société, conscience d'exclusion, elle ne peut constituer un système d'orientation de l'action ouvrière. (...)

Le principe d'opposition ne se dégrade en conscience prolétarienne que quand ils s'isolent des autres éléments constitutifs de la conscience ouvrière, et en particulier de la conscience de la société industrielle. (Touraine 1966: 321-323)

This point already accounts for the relative strength of oppositional feelings (especially of 'class') among the Poles. Touraine suggests that typical of the 'proletarian consciousness' forms of conflict are slow-down and to an even greater extent sabotage. In Bielsko-Biała, the most 'proletarian' of the plants analysed, cases of sabotage were reported by the interviewees, and in Tychy even cases of violence (like the destruction of managers' cars).

In a later work, Touraine identified a few features of a 'proletarian consciousness' which only when joined to the 'proud worker consciousness' might give rise to the worker movement (Touraine, Dubet, and Wieviorka 1984). These features are: (1) political heteronomy, which Marx (1852) ascribed to the *Lumpenproletariat*; (2) mobilisation through occasional revolts; (3) 'economicism'. These features are not absent in Poland, although Solidarity's autonomy/heteronomy

in politics remains an open issue. Solidarity is autonomously present on the political scene, but questions may be raised about whether this political presence still takes place in the framework of workers' representation. According to David Ost (1996), for instance, non-workers in Poland have regularly succeeded in organising and even 'colonising' workers' movements. From my inquiry occasional revolts emerge as the preferred mobilisation patterns of Polish workers (they often recall the heroic, but defeated, revolts of 1956, 1970, 1976), and their 'economicism' is undeniable. To those three features, I would explicitly add fatalism, lack of hope, and the appeal to the generic defence of the 'human being', which is recurrent among the Polish activists while the defence of the 'worker' persists only in *Sierpień 80*. The combination of all these elements would recall, in Italy, the idea of a 'poor culture', consisting in psychological attitudes of concern with the future, which has been applied to the Southern regions and used to explain their economic backwardness (Mongardini 1987). In the Polish culture the opposition between poor and rich is deeply rooted (Marmuszewski 1998), and makes Hoggart's classical analyses still appropriate.

Nowadays, in any case, it is impossible to define as simply 'proletarian', like the labourers of the industrial revolution, workers who, in spite of everything, experience quite a different reality from that of their colleagues of a century before. This is why it is necessary to speak of '*neo-proletarian*'. Touraine's team already applied this concept to the workers at the bottom of the French work hierarchy. According to Touraine the '*new proletariat*' departed from the worker movement on three important points:

- rejetant la culture industrielle, il déserte le champ des conflits opposant ouvriers et maîtres de la production pour le contrôle des ressources propres aux sociétés industrielles;
- se tenant à distance de la contestation relative à l'organisation de la production, (...) il devient un acteur essentiellement politique et se tourne vers l'Etat (...)
- enfin, faute d'un principe positif à opposer au marché du travail dont il est totalement dépendant, son action politique ne s'organise que par le biais d'une soumission à des agents politiques ou intellectuelles extérieurs, bien différents d'une figure sociale positive comparable à celle des ouvriers qualifiés qui ont orienté le mouvement ouvrier vers un projet. (Touraine, Dubet and Wieviorka 1984: 292)

The Polish case is different from that of the French unskilled workers analysed by Touraine, but does not contradict these three points, although there is some

deviation especially on the second. The main difference is that the 'new' character of Polish 'proletarians' lies in their rupture with the past rather than in a re-orientation to politics (which takes place however at the central level).

The argument about a subjective 'neo-proletarian' model for Polish workers is not in conflict with the idea of disintegration floated in the previous chapter. Actually, it has even been argued (Balibar and Wallerstein 1988) that a deep differentiation is one of the characterising elements of 'proletarianised' individuals.

1.3 The inadequacy of structural explanations

Before proceeding to other findings which by the end of the chapter should corroborate an attempt to interpret these differences, I shall discuss two alternative, and very tempting, explanations. What has been called 'neo-proletarian' might be the simple, and provisory, outcome of a different standard of living or of a lower stage in the institutionalisation of industrial relations.

Both explanations contain one indisputably true element: in Poland the material conditions of workforce reproduction, to use Marx's jargon, are worse than in Italy, and the industrial relations system was recently reconstructed after a 50-year break. As mentioned in chapter 1, the 'material' variables become determining if one follows a version of Maslow's (1954) needs-scale theory: relatively poor workers will concentrate on primary, physical needs until their standard of living increases sufficiently to allow more ambitious goals (social, self-actualisation etc.).⁶

This kind of explanation meets a number of difficulties. First, it diametrically contrasts with the conclusions of classic sociological research, which has found strong 'pecuniary' orientations precisely among 'affluent' workers (Goldthorpe, Lockwood, Bechhofer and Platt 1969). Second, this interpretation is totally a-historical. It neglects previous experiences and forgets that Polish workers, in the very recent past, reached a high level of consciousness that is still visible, if fragmented, in occasional moral, cultural and political references. As argued by Hirschman (1982), the relation between private, concrete interest and commitment to public goals is not linear but rather 'shifting', that is discontinuous. Third, although a comparison of standards of living needs care,⁷ in recent years the real income of Polish workers has started to increase,⁸ and at both Fiat and Lucchini wages are well above the national average. Fourth, an

explanation *à-la*-Maslow remains at a very 'nominal' level: it does not search implicit meanings. Economic demands are actually not that rudimentary.

La revendication économique isolée n'est pas l'expression d'un calcul économique rationnel, mais la manifestation de l'impuissance ouvrière à agir sur le fonctionnement et sur l'orientation des entreprises. Elle n'est donc pas le type de conduite la plus élémentaire, mais la plus complexe. (Touraine 1966: 24)

The interviews collected in the Fiat and Lucchini plants in some cases reveal the presence of different meanings.

...maybe not financially, but concerning the atmosphere, personal relationships were different and this is what made work more interesting, and satisfaction with this work. And now we don't have satisfaction either from the pay or from the work. [ta7]

Not only the material *economic* demands, but also the material conditions at work should be treated very carefully. Work conditions do not have an inherent, autonomous meaning prior to workers' interpretation. Moreover, even a quick, superficial visit to the plants – which I made in 1996 – unveils a very differentiated reality within the Polish factories. In Tychy, for instance, the press shop uses old-fashioned machines built in the '70s in East Germany; the welding department works around the 'Robogate', symbol of the '80s high-automation phase in Fiat history; the paint shop exploits the best technologies of the '90s. And yet there is no direct link between technology and workers' consciousness: the two are mediated by organisation and by history. Therefore, the apparent backwardness of Polish workers cannot be explained by the more rude and backward working conditions. Actually, the darkest images of work come from the most modern workshop of the Tychy factory, the paint shop, which a Fiat executive presented to me as 'probably' the most modern in Europe.

In the paint shop it is horrible, I work in maintenance and it's something... it is the most modern workshop, it is considered a labour camp. [ta1]

As regards industrial relations institutionalisation, the main point borne out by this perspective is the lack of trust in the Polish plants. On this view, Poland and Italy would be different for the same reason which explains the difference between Britain and Scandinavia (Ingham 1974). The institutional approach proved to be suitable in Eastern Europe, as an increasing number of analyses show (e.g. Hausner, Jessop and Nielsen 1995; Poznański 1996; Hirszowicz and Mailer 1996; Delorme 1996; Flanagan 1998; Pickels and Smith 1998; Frege and Tóth 1999). Indeed, bargaining in Poland is

often turbulent and the starting claims of the two counterparts are usually more distant than in the West. The history of institutionalisation may be seen as decisive for the actual content of the rules: only after institutionalisation do the formal precepts acquire a shared meaning. In particular, industrial relations are seen as largely depending on reciprocal *trust*, which in turn is seen as laboriously constructed through institutionalisation and experience (Fox 1974). According to this approach, the fear and uneasiness shown by the Poles is due to their still insufficient familiarity with the industrial relations system established between 1991 and 1996 and still unachieved in some aspects.⁹

The institutional approach meets two problems, respectively inherent and contingent. The first question is whether institutionalisation can still be treated as an important and positive process in a period that seems rather one of 'de-institutionalisation'. In the economic sphere, the history of capitalism is not one of gradual, unbroken trust building; the relationship between time and trust is not linear, and recent trends might even suggest that it could be represented by an inverted U-curve.¹⁰ The second problem is specific to the Italo-Polish comparison. The Italian system is itself considered as typically lacking institutionalisation. On some issues, like the very important one of strike regulation, Polish industrial relations are much more 'institutionalised' than Italy.¹¹ Notably, Fiat's century-long history seems one of *mistrust*-institutionalisation rather than the opposite. So speaks, for instance, an activist of the moderate Fim from the 'participative' plant of Rivalta.

For example, now Romiti [Fiat president at the time of the interview] is under investigation and the *cassa integrazione* [temporary lay-off] has started, as a blackmail to the government, to the town of Turin. 'I put 600 people in *cassa*, the trial finishes? 300 people in *cassa*; they attack Fiat? If things are not arranged, we'll stop the factories.' I say, they have got the orders, but they hide them till the right moment, and then they bring them out and they squeeze people, they make the production and then again the *cassa*. So, with this system they put the state into crisis, which has to fork out for the *cassa integrazione*. According to what my colleagues were saying, just today one of them makes the *cassa*, we are in a bad situation, and he made the remark 'eh, they investigate Romiti and they make the *cassa integrazione*'. It seems a bloody nonsense, but it may be that something influences, at some moment... If Fiat gets a cold, it sends the cold to everything around, and the whole economy closes down. [ri7]

The findings of this research confirm a low level of trust in both countries. In the Polish case the form of this mistrust is sometimes striking, however it is impossible precisely to measure and compare trust levels. An interesting example of Polish mistrust comes from the Tychy plant. Here, the trade unions refused even to

look at documents on the Fiat financial situations presented by the company. These documents had been prepared by one of the 'Big Six' (later 'Big Five'), the multinational auditing companies which have become fundamental 'institutions' of modern capitalism. According to the activists the auditor had certainly been corrupted by Fiat management. Similarly, *Popiełuszko* activists see as a scandal the fact that AWS, the Solidarity political party, is advised by the same company (another one of the 'Big Six') which was advising Fiat at the time of the FSM take-over. Nevertheless, the interpretation of this mistrust for capitalist institutions is not automatic. Does it really mean that Poles are 'backward'? Or rather that, conversely, they already express, if imperfectly, a new conflict, typical of the period of transition from the industrial to the post-industrial society, between financial capitalism and the productive economy, between the global networks and the local physical entities excluded from those networks?

2. The reciprocal attitudes

2.1 *Italians and Poles in the mirror*

Before proceeding to sociological speculations about Italy-Poland differences, it is important to listen to the protagonists. The majority of the interviewees who speak about their counterparts describe them in negative terms. These feelings also emerge off the record: the Poles tell jokes about the Italians, the Turinenses make offensive gestures at Polish workers visiting Mirafiori behind their backs. A positive image of foreign colleagues is very rare in Italy, where the attention paid to foreign situations is altogether weaker. To summarise, in Poland out of 39 interviewees, 9 (of whom 6 were from the *Sierpień 80* union) display a positive image of the Italian workers and trade unions, and 12 a negative one. In Italy, out of 49¹² interviews I found 2 positive references to the Poles and 11 negative.

A short methodological remark should be made. The more positive attitudes recorded in Poland might be due to restraint on the part of Polish interviewees speaking to an Italian. However, following the recommendations of reflexive sociology (Rebughini 1998), any measure was taken all during the research process in order to reduce this possible disturbance factor, and especially the interviewer's

identification with Italy.¹³ Since the data do not come from questionnaires but from long, in-depth and non-directive interviews, the results seem methodologically satisfactory. The restraint is limited to short introductory statements of the kind 'I have nothing against the Italians as a whole, but...', which recall the statement well-known to the sociologists of racism 'I am not racist, but...'. In fact, the Poles felt no compunction about using nationalist and anti-Italian arguments whenever they wanted. Table 1 as well as the figures given above on the reciprocal views show that in Poland nationalist references and negative images of foreign counterparts are more frequent than in Italy. In the next sections, this will be used as evidence of the significance of their willingness to cooperate with the Italians: if they do not feel ashamed of openly criticising the Italians, why should the statements about international union cooperation (an issue less strongly subject to moral codification) be due to social pressure?

The weight and the meaning of the representations is manifold. Qualitatively, Polish disfavour is stronger than the Italian, especially when it combines with other opposition feelings. This is all the more significant, taking into account that according to surveys, Poles' attitudes towards the Italians are very positive: in 1991 Italians rated third (after US and France) among 22 nationalities for 'friendship towards Poland' (Jasińska-Kania 1992). Only extensive quotations can account for interviewees' representations. The first basis for disfavour is a sort of rivalry in work identities. At Fiat, this is rooted in the often negative experience of work reorganisation in 1991-1993, when about 500 Italian workers came to Poland to 'teach' the Poles to produce the *Cinquecento*.

Basically you can't compare, though when Fiat arrived here the gentlemen from Italy had to teach us, and it turned out the other way around, we taught them how one should work. Really, I'm not saying that they were incompetent, in a sense they were competent, but it turned out that we know more than they do. They're able to work in a soporific way, and me if I work I work, I can't do differently, that's the way I was taught, I'm not paid to sit down but to work. And the Italian workers, very good colleagues, they know how to enjoy themselves, but at work... yet we taught them something. [tm3]

I know how the Italians worked. An Italian came to us, there were two cars, the Italians changed eight wheels in eight hours. I don't criticise them, I respect them for that, they did work because they were around the car, but a Pole does it in five minutes, and executes the job as skillfully as they do. [ta7]

The [Polish] worker performs the job accurately. For example they have placed the cars, the same cars, produced in Italy and in Poland, incomparable quality, our productivity is higher.

I'm not saying that Italians do badly because I've never been to Italy, but you see it from the details. That way it's possible to see what kind of workers the Poles and Italians are, and it can be seen very clearly. [ta8]

Behind a general producers' pride, many elements are present in these descriptions: the absence of any class opposition principle for the *Metalowcy* unionist (first extract), the envy of the Italians' familiarity with resistance at work (second extract), and a pure rivalry about productivity. The first two elements are specific to the Polish situation, the last one by contrast can be found in a perfectly symmetrical form in some Italian interviews. The availability of symmetric imputations strongly argues for their stereotyped nature.

I felt bitter when the *Cinquecento* was moved to Poland, we were the ones who designed it... Fiat made a mistake: the first cars had to be rectified all the time because Polish workers were incompetent at assembly line work. [mf3]

I have a car made in Poland and I'd rather kill myself, it's horrible, a *Cinquecento*, I still have to find somewhere where water does *not* set inside. They should stop for a while with the factories abroad. I agree, but salaries like ours, instead everything is to the boss's advantage. You pay people 800,000 Lire a month and then you sell the cars horribly dear, so you gain. If I were the boss I'd put factories abroad too. I don't agree with this, there should be some control, otherwise Italy will close down. [ri8]

What today, and for a few years, will keep [jobs] here is quality, because we have a culture which in those countries probably allows only certain things to be produced. But in time this will be less true and without a true equilibrium, in the true sense of the word... because if they work there for less, it's clear that they will be more competitive than us, and there will be some problem. I don't know, we'll have to give more than the others. This is the point, the other is political stability which disadvantages them a bit. [rf1]

The last two extracts immediately reveal that the Italian feeling of superiority is not self-assured. As a consequence, in many cases Italians, rather than opening a risky discussion about competition at work, prefer to stress Polish poverty and Fiat's unfair exploitation of this poverty. This representation has two components. The first is the representation of Poland as an awful place. This is universal in both Fiat and Lucchini, especially among clerks and executives¹⁴ but among blue-collar workers too.

The only danger with investments abroad is that when there is work up there they might send me... when somebody is undesirable, I'm not speaking of myself, I'm speaking in general, if they don't want to fire him, they have only to say to somebody from Piombino 'you go to Poland'. For me it would be a punishment, it would cost me. [pf10]

Italians in this way see the inferiority of Poles not in production, but in their working and living conditions: the competition is therefore unfair. This discourse is delicate however, and Italian activists do not dwell on it, feeling an understandable

uneasiness in the unusual role of the 'privileged'. As a consequence, for many Italians the favoured approach (and the second component of the Italian representation of Polish workers) is to treat as inferior not Polish workers, but their trade unions. These are seen as too weak and as guilty of the unfair competition that stems from their weakness.

Then I hope that the *underdeveloped* countries wake up, that the unions strengthen, that they also start to claim rights in those countries. [ri4]

Many Poles in turn see the Italian trade unions as guilty of a lack of solidarity. In both companies, during important disputes (at Fiat in 1992, at Lucchini in 1994) the Italian trade unions did not intervene. In the first case, the Fim-Cisl even supported the employer's side, and in the second there was an absolute lack of interest and information in the Italian unions.

There were sometime attempts [to cooperate], but the Italian trade unions are not interested. The problem is the labour market: the worse it is here for us, the better there for them; the less we earn, the more they'll earn there; the more they fire here, for example they cede some parts to Italian companies, the less they'll fire there. After all this is the labour market. The Italian trade unions are not interested. [ta1]

We attempt to cooperate with the Italian trade unions but they don't cooperate back, even the two foundries in Piombino don't agree with each other.¹⁵ They don't want us because the European Works Council would decide where to invest, they were afraid in Piombino because of investment in Poland. [hs5]

I was in Piombino for two months last year. Down there the unions are different, they go to the director for dinner and they arrange things. I encountered the unionists that way. I was working in my post, two guys in suits come and a colleague tells me: 'these are our unions'.¹⁶ Here it's different, the unionists are normal people. (...) The way of acting for the unions is different, down there they arrange things at the regional level, here they do it in the workshop, and, if we don't manage there, at the plant level. Down there, Rome decides how many hours Piombino has to strike. They're able to organise wild-cat strikes to stop the whole factory, here we don't do it. Down there, there is an informal fair-play, here we're taught that everything must be written and signed. Down there workers have the feeling that the unions don't help. [hs3]

Not all the Poles, however, have such negative impressions of their Italian counterparts. Unlike in Italy, positive views also exist, notably a not uncommon admiration for, or envy of, the Western unions. This happens especially in *Sierpień 80*, the Polish union which comes closest to class consciousness.

Down there, the trade unions also operate differently, they take care of the worker, they have a much wider range of action, if something is not O.K. it isn't management which decides, but the worker has an influence on what we do. It happened to somebody that a section of the line stopped, I don't know exactly what was it about, but in any case a component was lacking, it hadn't been distributed, and they halted the line. It emerges that a component is lacking and

they say 'it must be here'. And here, if a component is lacking you must go and look for it, you must find it. [ta5]

This envy is linked to a wider visionary representation of the West, which even if rapidly declining after 1989 still operates in the Polish imagination.

Social welfare is better in France than it is here, even though there was a communist state here. There, they look after every need, even satisfy people's whims (...). Here there are no companies providing housing with the job, in France there are many that do. [bs4]

Both positive and negative views, in any case, converge in the effect of widening the perceived gap between Italy and Poland. Negative stereotypes are the most striking form of this gap, and although the majority of the interviewees do not fall into stereotypes, the overall environment is clearly receptive to them. This situation raises a number of problems on which the sociology of racism might contribute to the sociology of work. Prejudices should be weakened by direct experience, but the comments of the Polish worker transferred to Piombino suggests that this is not a sufficient condition. Work is indeed a situation where status in the company may affect external status, and therefore it has a unique potential for integration. Nevertheless, research on topics like racism at work (e.g. Bataille 1997), gendered jobs (e.g. Williams 1989; Crompton and Sanderson 1990), or the disabled at work (e.g. Meardi 1993) has revealed how the work setting may reproduce invisible niches where segregation endures. Necessary conditions to make the work situation tend towards integration are the effectively equal status of the different workers and the availability of communication channels. These conditions were not met during the presence of about 500 Italian workers in the Polish Fiat factories in the early '90s. That experience ultimately reinforced reciprocal antagonisms, with the exception of a few workers who had personal common experiences or could communicate. The following extracts illustrate the two opposite situations (distance vs. contact experience).

I didn't have any contact with the Italian workers, but back then when they were here they weren't held in high repute. First of all how they behaved, and then the conditions created for them by Fiat, for example as regards the flats, they gave them 2-, 3-roomed flats, this was really a lot, equipped, furnished, with TV, washing machine, refrigerator, and even a charwoman, and this made people angry. And they also left these flats in different states. They showed their superiority, I don't know how to define it. That was the main thing, but most people got furious about the money they earned too, at that time we earned 3-4 millions and they earned 30-40, this was a lot, a huge difference. [ta4]

With regard to the ordinary Italian workers who were here, there were different situations, some were better, some were worse. We got on well together 80% of the time. There was one who had been to Russia during the war,¹⁷ he didn't speak Polish but he spoke Russian perfectly, a nice guy. But this is at the bottom level, higher it was worse, I had unpleasant contacts. [ta2]

I met an Italian who was here for two months and it was very pleasant. They were very nice, and he also said, we asked him, he had the same stories in his family, he had a son who studied electronics and a daughter medicine, he said that studying in Italy is very expensive. And so on, about studying here, about studying there... And when they noticed that he talked so much with the Poles they arranged for him to go home early. [ta3]

The issue of ethnic prejudices may take a particular relevance in Poland, and in Eastern Europe as a whole. Multicultural relations in Polish multinational companies have actually already become a topic for research (e.g. Korporowicz 1996). More generally, anti-Semitism is widely considered a traditional problem of Polish society, and even if in 1980-81 it was absent from Solidarity at the political level, it did endure at the bottom level within the union (Wieviorka 1984; 1992). Nowadays, the anti-Semitism and xenophobia of the Solidarity organisation in the Ursus tractor factory are well-known and, although its importance is often overestimated by the media, they are confirmed by my participant observation in many of their street demonstrations between 1996 and 1998. Even in the Fiat plants, as we have already mentioned, one of the trade unions (Solidarity 80 from Bielsko-Biała) took part in the 1998 anti-Semitic mobilisation in defence of the Pope's Cross in the Auschwitz camp. However, if Ursus Solidarity is marginal at the national level (and not representative of the workforce of the firm, as I shall show), the role of Solidarity 80 at Fiat is absolutely minimal.

During the 1994 strike at *Huta Lucchini-Warszawa* it was possible to hear accusations about the Italians like 'they don't work, they only exploit others' work', or 'they control the media and, through the *mafia*, the financial markets' (as I gather from personal accounts of local observers). These allegations were used by the Poles, in the past, against Russians and Jews. Their 'recycling' against a very different ethnic group would strongly support the sociological assertion that racism is a problem of the 'racialising' subject and not at all of the 'racialised' object (Wieviorka 1991). In particular, the element of opposition to modernisation inherent in traditional Polish anti-Semitism seemed to operate against Western investors.

However, these kinds of statements have absolutely disappeared since then and there is no trace of them left in the interviews. At the same time, surveys of trade union members indicate a rapid decline of xenophobia after democratisation. The quota of union members who considered the Jews as the group with 'most influence on the government' dropped from an astonishing 43.2% in 1990 (32.5% for Solidarity, 46.8% for the OPZZ) to 14.1% in 1993 (Gardawski, Gilejko and Żukowski 1994: 78). According to the same survey, in 1993 a much larger group (37%) saw as 'most influential' foreign capital in general, revealing a rapid reorientation from racial categories in the period of maximal mess to approximately 'class' categories once economic reform had produced its first outcomes. Other surveys (Badora and Starzyński 1995) confirm that emotional reactions against foreign investors stem from the *lack* of contact with them rather than the opposite.

It seems therefore that only in the cases of maximal confusion, isolation and tension (as in the *Huta* during the 1994 strike, or at the beginning of 1990 after the dramatic increase in prices following their liberalisation) does anti-Semitism reappear as an orientation for action. The case of nationalist feelings is different: Solidarity has been since the beginning a nationalist movement at least as much as a social one.¹⁸ A general xenophobia with respect to foreign companies appears in statements like 'they're guests here, but they behave as if they were in their own homes', in which foreign investors are seen through the same lens through which many Germans see the *Gastarbeiter*. Moreover, the Polish media have repeatedly shown more warmth toward the nationalist standpoints of the unions than toward the 'class' ones.¹⁹ It must be recalled, however, that the decline of the worker movement made nationalist and xenophobic feelings more visible everywhere in Europe (although not necessarily stronger). During the last few years in many Western countries xenophobic parties have significantly increased their popularity among blue-collar workers.²⁰ Again, as in the case of standards of living and of mistrust, nationalism is not satisfactory as an explanatory factor for Italo-Polish difference.

2.2 Transnational trade union action: rhetoric and practice

The Polish and Italian trade unions in the two companies analysed here have no contacts with each other. Should they? This is the frequent recommendation of

analysts of globalization. Globalization threatens labour: this is the usual comment (e.g. Tilly 1995). Pessimism, when not 'catastrophism', prevails in the descriptions of globalization from labour's point of view (e.g. Barnet and Cavanagh 1995; Ross and Trachte 1990). Only a few Marxists display sufficient faith to persist with the view that 'the worse, the better' (e.g. Howard 1995): the internationalisation of capital makes the contradictions of capitalism more striking and so accelerates its downfall. However, as soon as one starts to look at the actual labour movement, the reaction to this threat emerges as a complex issue.

Indeed, the problem is not new. Apart from the political appeals starting with Marx and Engels (1848), trade unions have since their beginnings seen with disquietude the internationalisation of the economy. When nation states started proving to be an insufficient regulatory framework, a need for transnational action emerged. Functionalist sociology developed the thesis of a natural internationalisation of the unions following that of the economy (Haas 1958), just as the emergence of national markets had forced the unions to centralise at the national level (Commons 1909). This was not the only functionalist forecast to be proved wrong. On the unionists' side, Charles Levinson, general secretary of the International Metalworkers' Federation, in the '60s elaborated a proposal for international collective bargaining. According to Levinson, transnational union action had to develop through three phases: organisation of international support for local struggles; coordination of collective bargaining across the different branches of MNC; integrated bargaining with the multinationals' management. Apart from very isolated cases (e.g. the Philips group), nowhere have the unions gone beyond the first phase.

At the European level, the issue became compelling in the '90s, with the Hoover affair (EIRR 1993). However, even the newly constituted European Works Councils (1994) have not yet proved sufficient as a means for effective transnational action, rarely going beyond routine requests for information (Schulten 1996; Lecher 1998), and the European Trade Union Confederation cannot yet be called a union (Gobin 1997). Union attempts to influence internationalisation remained mainly national-level strategies, and the transnational structures remained a rather formal construct (Due J., Jensen C.S. and Madsen J.S. 1995; Turner 1996). Although one can

still find optimistic and voluntarist opinions (e.g. Jacoby 1996), the development of European industrial relations is not impressive. National systems therefore remain for some authors the only practicable horizon for industrial relations.

In the absence of realistic possibilities for pushing social re-regulation upwards to the supranational level, its prospects depend on a re-building under the new conditions of national capacities for market correction. (Streeck 1998: 453)

Following the theoretical approach described in the second Chapter, I should add that the problem is not only one of regulation and of interests, but also of identity. As even sympathetic specialists have acknowledged, one limit of the ETUC has been

the incapacity to promote a workers' transnational identity. Consequently, the various interests and identities which compose the ETUC remain mostly unchanged. In fact, the transnational workers' identity, generated by action, may emerge from opposition to integration rather than from its support. (Hoffman, Lind, and Waddington 1998: 79)

Fieldwork in multinational companies can add something to this scientific/political debate which is often deadlocked in extreme opposing views. The absence of effective transnational cooperation between Italian and Polish trade unions is certainly not only the fault of the unions, but is also the outcome of the employer's strategy. When in 1996 the Fiat European Works Council was created, the Italian unions actually requested the participation of Polish representatives, but Fiat rejected the demand arguing that the EWC Directive mentions only European Union countries. Leaving Fiat apart, there are cases (usually green-field plants) where the multinational management has made a major and successful effort to avoid the overall presence of unions. But this will be dealt with later in the chapter: here I shall discuss the importance of workers' views about the possibility of the emergence of a European-level unionism.

First, we can observe unionists' opinions about globalization. Direct concern with this issue in Poland seems very weak. Only 5 interviews out of 39 mention it, almost always (4 cases) in moderately positive terms. In only one case, which is more precisely to do with Europeanization, the attitude is negative.²¹

We are inclined to Europe, Europe will embrace us, but what for? So that we work for them.
[tz2]

Italian activists dwell upon globalization much more frequently, but this may be the outcome of the slightly directive character of the interviews on this point. In fact, towards the end of the conversations, if they had not touched the issue

spontaneously, Italians were asked their opinions about the plants 'abroad', while Poles about the plants 'in Italy', which less directly raises the problem of globalization. Altogether, throughout the 49 Italian interviews (the Siderco company was excluded as it is not a multinational) there are 36 personal references to this issue. The dominant attitude is opposite to that in Poland: 24 interviews display negative representations, and only 7 positive ones.

By dint of talking about globalization, people have globalized their brains too. Yet, alas, we really must deal with it. What changed in the company strategy? Once Fiat sent abroad, to Poland, to Russia, to Brazil, the worn out products that no longer did well in Europe and here. Now, instead, with globalization they produce where it costs them less and we even import those things. We can't stop them because there is the free market, commodities may freely circulate and this is globalization. [mf8]

The factories abroad, I disapprove of them, because it's clear that if they take jobs abroad they take them away from Italy. If these were supplementary investments it would be different, but if they take Italian jobs abroad this is not positive for us. Also the investments in Southern Italy are negative, for Turin. The union tries to do something, but it can't do more than that, because if Fiat decides a thing, it happens. Also because at most the union says 'no, you don't open Melfi, you go on working in the North', [then they answer] 'no? if you don't want Melfi, we'll go to India'. Then it's not worth it, let's take Melfi, at least it's in Italy, they always put an alternative which makes their proposal even worse, then you're forced to accept it, you choose the lesser evil. [rf5]

Usually the opposition to globalization remains at this level of refusal, without any counter-project. Slightly different is the Cobas case, where the opposition is better elaborated and focuses on specific points like Fiat's monopoly: the activists contest neither internationalisation nor investment abroad, but rather the fact that because of the monopolistic position of Fiat in Italy no foreign investment may arrive in Turin. This version, radical in the Turin political context but ideologically liberal, is a rare example in which the unions have a proposal of their own allowing them, at least in theory, to avoid the Scylla of negating reality and the Charybdis of passive adaptation.

A total refusal arises by contrast in some interviews in Piombino, where 5 activists speak of globalization only in order to deny that this is a relevant problem for the unions. They feel as if Piombino was the quiet centre of the world, though it is precisely their plant which has suffered the most because of international competition.²²

If this country sinks, they don't sink because they can go somewhere else, but they sink in this country. If they have to go somewhere else, in Thailand life is not as good as in Italy (...) The worker of Piombino, I think, is concerned only with the problem of Piombino, he doesn't think that the employer has got strange ideas, he knows that he's got this plant in Poland, but the

majority know that that plant is old, therefore it does not disturb Piombino so much, he knows that Piombino is the badge of Lucchini Siderurgica... [pf2]

Foreign affairs are not a worry, there is the conviction that Piombino will be the leader. What is a worry are relations in the factory. International relationships may help but it seems to me that everybody looks at the own business. For somebody it's fine like that, the others must solve their problems on their own. I've never talked about Warsaw with anybody. If we produce quality Warsaw won't be in competition with us. [pf8]

We never talk about the investments abroad, it's a problem we're not used to having, and we still don't talk about it. Also because we've been inside for so many years that we aren't yet in the mentality of private ownership, after 25-30 years of state ownership we have remained... nationalist. [pf9]

The representations of foreign workers (analysed in the previous section) and of globalization affect opinions on international union cooperation. Some Polish opinions have already been mentioned. In Italy, it seems that the historical internationalism has not withstood either internationalisation, or the issue of immigration.

We have even got to the point of putting people in *cassa integrazione* in order to hire immigrants, they try to wear down the union on these issues. (...) Last week I was around Brescia [Northern Italy, the town of origin of Lucchini and his company] and I was scared because I saw so many immigrants at work, and the danger is that we have a row, they take the immigrants and bring them here for one million a month, and it will be a chaos also for the union, I have no idea how it will be solved. [pf2]

There is a problem, there is, it's a problem that exists and will bring about a problem for us, I don't know how we could get away from it. I don't believe that it's enough to meet as unions, in any case there are problems of culture, and then in certain countries the unions I don't know how much weight they have. In Poland maybe it's different but in Asia I don't know how much weight the unions have, I think they have little weight, and we can't think of combining, it makes no sense, down there people starve and it's clear... also not letting people starve is good, so if this means an impoverishment for us, we'll pay this cost. [rf1]

The transfers abroad are seen as a cheat, it's right, they happen but... We can't love each other so much, competition is natural. Here, we have hopes for product differentiation, keeping the high-quality ones here. [rf8]

Not all the interviewees share such negative views. In particular the first extract quoted above is absolutely not representative: this is the only vaguely xenophobic statement I found in hundreds of pages of interview transcriptions. However, all three quotations above come from distinctively politicised (on the Left) activists, and they are therefore particularly meaningful: if politically 'conscious' workers freely express these ideas, their 'common' colleagues are probably even more inclined to national withdrawal. The unionist of the first extract is even personally involved in cooperation programs with the German unions, and is a supporter of a

'Europeanization' of the union structure. This example shows how wide may be the gap in attitudes between the official level of the union structure and the everyday level of work and employment problems.

The fragility of internationalism is not so surprising if one remembers that historians have repeatedly indicated the limits of the traditional ideological internationalism of the labour movement (e.g. Gallissot, Paris and Weill 1989; Pasture and Verberckmoes 1998). With regard to ideological tradition, the Italian and Polish trade unions are different. The Italian labour movement has historically been one of the most internationalist. Not only have the unions guided pacifist demonstrations for decades; in Turin workers rebelled against intervention in World War I, and in Genoa the dockers for a long time refused to unload ships from Franco's Spain or Pinochet's Chile.²³ The Polish worker movement has a different history in this regard. The national question was a fundamental issue for the emerging trade unions as well as for the socialist movement: precisely on this issue Józef Piłsudski argued with Rosa Luxemburg and created the Polish Socialist Party; Solidarity rediscovered the tradition of the struggle for independence.

At the enterprise level, however, the opinions of Italian and Polish activists about transnational union action do not reflect these traditions. Throughout the interviews, we find in Italy 10 positive and 16 negative views (from a total of 49 interviews considered), while in Poland 13 express positive views and only 5 negative ones (from a total of 39 interviews). I have deemed negative not only opinions explicitly against (these are very rare), but also the representations of transnational action as basically useless and costly.

This finding would be difficult to understand if one followed a game-theoretical approach: it is the Italian rather than the Polish side which has an 'interest' in avoiding social dumping. Polish unionists may be attracted by the richer resources of their Italian counterparts (Solidarity benefited from huge international help in the '80s and in the early '90s), but this does not seem very important at the company level. More convincing may be a hypothesis focusing on strategy: for the Polish unions Italian solidarity in the case of a work dispute can be useful because of the

higher *visibility* of the latter. By contrast, Polish unions' solidarity with Italy would be almost irrelevant because of their peripheral position.

Neither is the current situation easily understandable from the historical point of view. Italian and Polish unions did not meet the problem of *establishing* contacts: these contacts already existed. During the '80s the Italian unions were among the Western organisations most active in 'solidarity with Solidarity'. This was particularly true at Fiat. In 1981 Turin unions organised a unique program of exchange with Solidarity from the FSO plant in Warsaw (at that time working under Fiat licence, nowadays taken-over by Daewoo), and maintained their connections after the introduction of martial law. More involved, because of its Christian roots, was clearly Cisl; this union experienced something similar to the 'identity of substitution' and the fascination shown by the French CFDT in its engagement on behalf of Solidarity (Frybes 1997; Chwalba 1997). Nevertheless, in contrast to the French situation, in Italy the engagement was shared, though less enthusiastically, by the communist-led Cgil, which a few months before the August of Gdansk had resolutely and immediately condemned Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. In September 1980, at the gates of Mirafiori, beside the portraits of Gramsci and Marx strikers' placards said: 'we will do as Gdańsk does'. In 1991-92 the Fim-Cisl from Turin organised some courses for unionists from the Bielsko-Biała plant. After that, nothing from the 12 years of exchange has remained. The relationships were too asymmetrical to help the construction of effective union cooperation. Moreover, they took place in a period when (maybe for the last time) it was still easy for the unions to distinguish 'friends' from 'enemies'.

Nowadays, and not only at Fiat and at Lucchini, cooperation between the unions from Eastern and Western Europe is difficult. It was not until December 1995 that the first nine Eastern unions were accepted into the European Trade Union Confederation, blocked in the dilemma 'enlargement or deepening' (Seideneck 1993). In the auto sector there has been some attention from the Western side (e.g. Automotive Department 1992) but in the steel sector the situation has been very deceptive (Bacon and Blyton 1996). In general, Western unions (and the social-democratic parties they support) are not enthusiastic about the Eastern enlargement of

Europe, and in this way dialectically produce a symmetrical mistrust among the Eastern unions.²⁴ This is most visible in the cool attitudes of the German and Austrian trade unions (the 'hard-core' of the European social model) on the free movement of Central Eastern European workers (Poprzęcki 1999).

At the same time in some Eastern countries the first forms of 'holy alliances' between governments, employers, and unions in the name of national competitiveness have appeared, similar to those frequent in developing countries. Although the main Polish trade unions declare to be pro-European, the radical right wing of Solidarity, Solidarity 80 and *Sierpień 80* are resolutely anti-European, while the OPZZ upholds a 'quiet, after careful meditation' and 'not before 2007' entry into the EU (Wiaderny 1999). As a result, what were expected to become potential bases for the internationalisation of labour – the ideal of a social Europe (Hyman 1996b) or a common ground of similar concerns (Jacoby 1995) – have not emerged as sufficient driving forces.

At this point, older sociological works are maybe more useful in explaining this state: solidarity requires common *experiences*, or, better, the *Kreuzung sozialer Kreise* (Simmel 1908). Although the workers of the multinational companies may share a set of *interests* at the global level, they have not yet experienced *social encounters*. This is what I called in chapter 2 the emerging gap between the boundaries of interests and the boundaries of experience. The nebulous character of the global experience of union activists explains the weakness of their transnational action, which requires something different from the old internationalism.

Alors que les grands engagements du passé se sont inscrits dans le cadre de la nation, quand bien même ils ont pu se réclamer d'un internationalisme actif, l'action peut aujourd'hui déborder l'espace de la nation, sans être pour autant nécessairement internationaliste. Elle peut ainsi relever d'identités transfrontalières, de réseaux culturels planétaires, de norias et de diasporas, ou associer un réel localisme des perspectives quotidiennes de l'action à une vision mondiale des enjeux. (Wieviorka 1998: 42)

From the inquiry, traditional internationalism seems even to be inversely related to actual international solidarity. In the next chapter I shall discuss the possibility of new solidarities and the role of the trade unions in this context. But first it is necessary to deepen the analysis of the Italo-Polish differences.

3. The impact of the 'alternation' experience in Poland

3.1 Polish backwardness under investigation

3.1.1 Trade unions and social change

A general problem which lies behind Italy-Poland difference is that of social change. In a common view Eastern Europe is seen as somehow at a backward stage of social development; at the same time, those countries recently went through a radical change not experienced by Western societies. In the interviews the issue of social change often appears, but its analysis is very complex because of the variety of topics, contexts, and references. Table 2 attempts to summarise the content of the interviews.

Table 2- attitudes towards selected issues

| Issue | | Italy (N: 49) | Poland (N: 39) |
|-------------------------------|-------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Modernisation* | -positive | 19 | 16 |
| | -negative | 16 | 7 |
| | -negation** | 9 | 0 |
| Industry | -positive | 7 | 2 |
| | -negative | 7 | 6 |
| Old reality | -positive | 11 | 10 |
| | -negative | 3 | 7 |
| Privatisation | -positive | 4*** | 8 |
| | -negative | 10*** | 13 |
| Regime change | -positive | - | 10 |
| | -negative | - | 21 |
| | -negation | - | 2 |
| Globalization* | -positive | 7 | 4 |
| | -negative | 24 | 1 |
| | -negation | 5 | 0 |
| Unions' internationalisation* | -positive | 10 | 13 |
| | -negative | 16 | 5 |

*difference significant at the $p < .05$ level (Chi squared test).²⁵

**As negation have been coded the attitude of the kind: 'the problem does not exist/does not matter'.

***N: 16 because only the Lucchini case has been considered (Fiat is not a privatised company.)

The analysis of these data must be extremely cautious since they have an epistemological status even lower than those presented in Table 1. While Table 1, and all of chapter 3, analysed *references* and therefore respected the coherence of each interview and were not strongly influenced by differences of narrative, Table 2 and

this section will carry out a more risky *thematic* analysis. Themes, or issues, may vary, and change meaning, across the interviews for very different reasons.

A supplementary difficulty is that of distinguishing *positive* and *negative* attitudes on issues such as privatisation or globalization. An attitudes analysis becomes meaningful only if it analytically distinguishes between the openness/rejection and the radicalism/moderation axes. An attempt in this direction has been made throughout the coding of interviews. Reports have been considered positive where there is an acceptance that a particular problem has to be dealt with and where it is seen as a possible area for union action, including those cases where this is associated with a radically critical view of the same.

From this analysis any image of Polish workers as particularly conservative emerges as misleading. This is however a frequent image, in domestic politics as well as in the international scientific debate (e.g. Kramer 1995; Adamski 1998; Winiecki 1998). Sztompka (1993) even argues that post-communist societies altogether suffer a 'civilizational incompetence', because of the deep cultural *legacy* inherited both from the distant pre-modern past and the more recent syndrome of 'fake' modernity imposed by real socialism. Interestingly, according to Sztompka the only agents able to undermine this backwardness are the elites most insulated from the impact of real socialism and most exposed to the influence of the *modern, Western culture*. Obviously, union rank and file are not included in the elites.

An authoritative view in this regard is that of the former dissident and Solidarity advisor Adam Michnik (today editor of a leading Polish newspaper, *Gazeta Wyborcza*). Already in the mid-80s he saw rank-and-file workers as dangerous 'new radicals' who could hinder political reform. After 1989 his fear grew further.

Les ouvriers des grandes entreprises industrielles, ceux-là mêmes par qui les grands changements en Pologne étaient arrivés, se retrouvaient devant la menace de perdre leur emploi. Cela ne pouvait manquer de faire naître des frustrations, d'autant plus importants que c'étaient le plus souvent ces entreprises que l'on présentait comme les générateurs des réformes sociales. (...)

Ceux qui entendent parler d'accélération n'entendent pas qu'on pourra entrer plus vite dans une économie de marché ou dans de nouvelles formes de propriété, mais qu'ils pourront plus vite accéder à la prospérité. La prospérité, pour les ouvriers qui ont vécu toute leur vie dans le communisme, cela signifie avoir toutes les garanties qui existaient dans le communisme, et encore plus, et encore mieux. Pour employer une métaphore, pour eux, l'idéal, c'est une économie où ils gagneraient autant que les Américaines, où ils bénéficieraient de la même

sécurité sociale que les Suédois et où ils travailleraient comme ils ont toujours travaillé en Pologne. (Michnik 1990: 52-53)

The interviews do not support this theory, especially if compared with the Italian ones. On none of the issues listed in Table 2 are Poles more conservative than their counterparts. On three issues, they are even significantly ($p < .05$) 'more' modern, in the sense of more open towards current social change.

Here, a definition of 'modernity' should be given. It is not necessary to enter into the rich sociological debate on the issue. The object here is not the scientific concept of modernity, but the common, dominant notion generally used, in the framework of the 'transition' paradigm, to define Eastern Europe as less modern than the Western, in particular with reference to industrial relations. I shall follow, just as I made while analysing workers' consciousness, the phenomenological strategy of *epochè*, suspending any judgement of value on this view, in order to concentrate on its subjective meaning.²⁶

In the dominant understanding, modernity is tightly tied to capitalism, better if disorganised (e.g. Lash and Urry 1987). This is certainly not in conflict with sociological thought, since the classical sociologists (Marx, Sombart, Maine, and slightly less directly Weber and Durkheim) have always associated modernity and capitalism.

In 1999, we obviously refer to the most recent forms of modernity, and not to those tightly linked to industrialisation (for our purpose, whether we call this modernity 'new', 'late', 'high', 'decadent', 'radical', 'reflexive', 'experimental' or even 'post', is of secondary importance). Today, theorists – although often in a critical way – still include capitalism in the definition of modernity (Giddens 1990) and macro-sociological analysis once again sees modernisation as a reinforcement of capitalism (Crouch 1999). According to Crouch, this would include processes of commercialisation, individualisation and fragmentation. These can be considered elements of the dominant conception of modernity. In the current dominant discourse on modernity, however, two supplementary elements appear besides capitalism:²⁷ first, the value of technological innovation and education; second, flexibility, a new term that reproduces in extreme terms Maine's idea of modernity as the decline of

status in the face of the rise of contract.²⁸ At work, it has been brilliantly remarked that this 'modern' model is actually quite old.

Les nouvelles formes 'particulières' d'emploi ressemblent davantage à d'anciennes formes d'embauche, lorsque le statut du travailleur s'effaçait devant les contraintes de travail. La flexibilité est une manière de nommer cette nécessité de l'ajustement du travailleur moderne à sa tâche. (Castel 95: 402).

For decades, North America has been the concrete model behind the dominant image of modernity.

America is the original version of modernity. We (Europeans) are dubbed or subtitled version. America ducks the question of origins; it cultivates no origin or mythical authenticity; it has no past and no founding truth. Having known no primitive accumulation of time, it lives in perpetual present. (Baudrillard 1988: 76)

This is particularly true in post-communist Central Europe.

America is an almost symbolic concentration of all the best and the worst of our civilisation. (Havel 1998: 24)

By the end of the '90s, in many aspects Poland is more similar to the United States than to Western Europe. Leaving McDonald's' invasion apart, the urban development of Warsaw is an example of rupture with the European traditions: the emerging 'inner city', the peripheral commercial centres and the new enclosed middle-class residential areas recall Atlanta more than any Western European town. In the everyday life, the popularity of the Internet is impressively 'American' and 'modern'. Politically, many of the current reforms, like the privatisation of the pension system and the planned 'linear' (non progressive) taxation bring Poland away from the Western European social model towards a North American ideal type. Political communication style (for instance Kwaśniewski's electoral campaign in 1995) is already a good copy of the American one. In foreign policy, during the Kosovo war in 1999 Poland has emerged as one of the staunchest allies of Washington. Sociologically, social inequality (which, however, by modernisation theory was seen as an obstacle to modernisation) is closer to the American than to the Western European figures.

This thesis is obviously not the right place for a thorough discussion of Polish modernity: besides the examples mentioned above many examples in the opposite sense might be found, though probably more in rural areas than in urban ones. Moreover, the problem of 'modernity' is a very puzzling one, which would require a

very long theoretical digression.²⁹ Here, I shall limit the analysis to the trade unions. In this field, the recent Human Resources Management theories are a dominant model of 'modernity'. For clarity purposes, representative of this conception may be considered the successful book by Handy (1984) on *'The Future of Work'*. That book popularised the idea of 'the need of continuous change', and magnified flexibility and any 'atypical' form of employment. Moreover, Handy explicitly described the trade unions as conservative.

In common with many organisations facing decline, [the trade unions] will tend to work harder at what they have always done rather than face up to the possibilities of a new future. (Handy 1984: 128)

The goal of an interpretative analysis is not to state whether a theory, as Handy's one, is good or bad. It is rather to investigate the internal meaning, acceptance and coherence. In this way, I shall try to show that current dominant discourse on modernisation in Eastern Europe is indeed widespread but inherently incoherent. The problems encountered by the current modernisation cannot be ascribed to the resistance of the 'material', and specifically of the trade unions. Actually, this 'material' is already much more modern – employing their own concept of modern – than it is in established modern capitalism.³⁰

3.1.2 Are Polish unionists more conservative than the Italian ones?

Following Handy and HRM theories, the dominant meaning of 'modern', at work, is 'open to frequent change'. The Poles have positive representations of organisational, economic, and technological change; they do not extol the preceding societal model; they are aware of the inevitability, and even sometimes of the profitability, of deindustrialisation. Change is not an enemy; quite the opposite, it is a positive thing, a field of rivalry with the employer, who is accused of changing too slowly. Already in the '80s Solidarity had been defined – following Habermas's definition of modernity – a 'modernisational movement' (Tatur 1989). After 1989, the Polish trade unions, in most cases, have been promoters of reform and restructuring, not of immobilism (Pańków 1993, 1999). This has not been a deliberate cultural choice, but the outcome, in some way forced, of the unique, impressive experience of the breakdown of communism. Neither is it a simple acquiescence to the employer, since the unions often are (or at least want to be) even *ahead* of the management.

The unions did officially request changes, they are at management's disposal in order to change, but few things have been obtained, there are few cases of change. [hs2]

It's difficult to compare those modernisation processes [of the '70s] with now, because now here there is no modernisation. (...) Ecologically this foundry has hugely improved, but basically it shouldn't stay here, between the town and the National Park. [hs7]

They presented it to us in this way, that this unusual foundry in the '90s, at the time of Balcerowicz's plan, had to be completely scrapped. Everybody knew it, here on this ground had to arise a residential district, can you figure out, later on some kind of goods airport, and I think that precisely this whole campaign around the steelworks changed people's minds. There was very heavy pressure to accept any investor without consideration, anybody who had some cash to save this company. [hs8]

Polish scepticism about industry might be regarded as an element of *pre-industrial* culture rather than *post-industrial*. While describing post-communist industrial relations, Frybes (1998: 204) underlines that the societies of Central-Eastern Europe, with the possible exception of Bohemia, before the communist experience were deeply traditional societies, with typically rural structures and mentalities. The peasant origins of many workers certainly influence their further cultural development. In the Soviet Union, the hurried transfer of entire populations to industrial work and to the urban space procured the preservation of archaic employment forms (Rolle 1998). In some Polish companies, like the Huta im. T. Sendzimira in Cracow, unions asked for voluntary redundancy packages to invest in family farms (Hardy *et al.* 1996). Nonetheless, two or three generations of industrial work and urban life (which is more than in the case of most Fiat workers in Turin³¹) and the experience of a true worker movement like Solidarity (as discussed above) have not been without effect. Most workers are today aware that the decline of Polish agriculture is even more inevitable than that of big industry. It is therefore hard to define the workers of the big factories of Warsaw and Silesia as pre-industrial.

In fact, a degree of 'conservatism', far from being specific to the Polish unions, has always been a characteristic of unionism (Tannenbaum 1951). In a way, this is, rather than a 'limit', an intrinsic 'function' of unionism: narrowing the gap between economic time (especially change pace) and social (human) time. In Italy, resistance is actually stronger and more convinced than in Poland. This is not a new finding, as the literature since the '80s has defined industrial workers as 'immobile'.

The working class – the factor par excellence for contestation of the existing order of things – seems to have adopted as its principal weapon practices of preservation of the status quo, staticness, rigidity, and *resistance*, while, on the other hand, change, proteiformity, and speed –

the grand myths of modernity – have to all intents become the attributes of capital. (Revelli 1996: 114)

Many interviews tend to confirm this image. Statements of the kind 'first of all, the union must defend what we already have' [rf6], never heard in Poland, are recurrent in Italy. Opposition to mobility is strong, references to the past as a framework for action are frequent, an activist even confesses 'I can't stand the story of modernity' [mf7]. 'Conservatism' is sometimes explicitly acknowledged.

The old times have remained impressed in our minds, we know that they belong to the past, but we can't help it. They can't brain-wash you from one day to another, I can't forget what I was doing yesterday, so organisational change is a bit traumatic. [pf9]

On substantive issues the difference is more evident. The *negation* of change is clear in some Italian discourses about political affairs, in which it is denied that the situation has significantly changed in the '90s (when actually a real shock invested Italian politics).

In Italy, the scheme of parties is quite clear, maybe it has changed *a little bit* in the last three or four years, but I see it as quite clear-cut. Previously they had one set of names, now they have another. Firstly there are those who represent the middle class, the self-employed, the business people; secondly, a set of people who live like blood-suckers; finally those who defend the less well-off classes, some of the small shop-keepers and of the most exploited, those with little ability to confront the people in power. Therefore it's quite clear, maybe there are divisions but substantially the scheme is that one.³² [mf7]

The same negation of reality appears on the issue of unemployment.

Jobs exist, but they have inculcated this idea that there are no jobs. [mf9]

Industrial work in Turin and even more in Piombino is still central. This may be seen when speaking of jobs, of security at work, or of environmental issues, though the Piombino unions as organisations officially requested anti-pollution measures.³³

A permanent job in the steelworks today is maybe more valuable than before for the young: the possibility to create a family, a future. [pf4]

If we had to work under safe conditions, we wouldn't ever work. (...) It's an environment where one must always work, a lot, more... and besides we don't make pasta, we don't make bread, we make dirty things, we work with steel, there's nothing you can do. You can't get everything in life. We may improve it but... Something may be done but... for instance the cokery is an environment where... but it is necessary, we must find the system to... I don't know which system can they find to eliminate so many... but at the same time it's necessary, the steelworks is a dirty place but it's necessary, otherwise we would close down and we make a seaside resort here in Piombino. [pf11]

Interestingly enough, while the previous extract from *Huta Warszawa* (hs8) considered a deindustrialisation of the area to be possible and realistic, this last Piombino worker treats it as an absurd.

In Italy, workers value very highly their experience.

It's clear that this factory, because of the integral cycle, its fixed stock and a number of other things, must make high quality production. This also requires our experience, it's clear that the anticipated retirements have weakened this professional knowledge, it's clear, at all levels, technical, organisational, and of workers. [pf4]

There are also counter-trends, but they are rarer. Women seem more likely to develop alternative discourses on change and industry.

Since the union represents the social side, it must defend the social side, which means that it must also govern outside. In this moment it must take initiatives, construct things which still don't exist, take care, I don't know, of education, of employment, a more open labour market, not a labour market which only produces problems like Fiat, but also other sorts of jobs, some alternatives because we can't live off cars forever. Sooner or later, the moment will arrive when the car won't be used anymore. The industry always creates problems, there is no warranty, there are serious concerns. [rf6]

The comparison of the privatisation processes in Poland and in Italy is very telling. In Warsaw Polish workers accepted privatisation by 98% in a ballot and tried to condition it. In Piombino the Italians tried, in a long strike, to avoid it and had later a very bad time while trying to influence it. The only Polish plant where opposition to privatisation is strong is the Tychy one, but this is more about the forms of privatisation than the idea itself. Moreover, Tychy is precisely where – as discussed in the previous chapter – a form of worker movement is enduring, and opposition to private property was almost natural for the worker movement.

One could add other examples, even more concrete. Italian unionists accept the traditional idea that social security charges should be calculated on wages (although on specific points they used to demand a disconnection of social assistance from social security). Poles strongly criticise it and are therefore closer to new heterodox approaches on welfare state financing. This must certainly be due to the Eastern European lack of familiarity with fiscal systems. However, again, this makes the Poles not 'backward' but close to the newest, emerging feelings of the Italian workforce (especially the non-unionised sector), which is increasingly receptive to anti-tax arguments.

In Poland industry-level bargaining is embryonic, but if we compare it with the Italian trends, it is probably the Italian system which is going in the Polish direction, rather than the opposite. If one accepts the Italian employers' point of view (which is usually considered more modern than the unions'), Poland is more modern in this

regard. The Italian employers since 1996 have repeatedly demanded the elimination of industry-level bargaining or at least the strong reduction of its scope: they dream of a Polish situation.

Permanent training is an important issue more in Warsaw, where workers appreciate re-qualification courses, than in Piombino, where the same are seen as a bothersome intrusion in a well-established life-routine. Italians' rootedness in the past emerges also in old-fashioned demands, for instance the restoration of the *scala mobile* (salary indexation system) which some Fiom activists still saw as a very important request in 1998, when the inflation rate in Italy was around 1.5%.

For the Poles, even less suitable than the 'conservative' definition is that of 'state-dependent' workers (Zaslavskij 1995). The Poles actually very rarely ask for state protection, unlike the Italians who on a number of issues (environment, retirement, redundancy, industrial policy) involve the state.

It is true that in Poland from time to time elements of resistance towards the logic of the market appear. But these are not peculiar to Poland: they all exist, sometimes even in a stronger form, also in Italy, like for instance the dislike of advertising expenditure. Sometimes (much more rarely than one might expect, however) Polish unions indeed threaten to use their *negative* power to block unfavourable measures. However, it is only ideologically that this may be seen as an element of conservatism; otherwise, we should treat in the same way employers' threats to desist from investment in the case of excessive union demands.

Other concrete examples of Polish 'modernity' refer to the everyday employment relations. If we assume as 'modern' the principles of Human Resources Management – suspending any judgement of value on them –, the Polish unions are certainly more 'modern' than the Italian ones. This is particularly visible in the case of jobs' defence. At Lucchini as well as at Daewoo the unions accept, and even cooperate in, individual dismissals for disciplinary reasons, which Italian unions in any case try to avoid. The Polish unions altogether, though they obviously fight redundancy measures, repeat that they do not want to maintain superfluous jobs – an argument stranger to the Italian unionists. As a matter of fact, at Lucchini Solidarity is actively trying to convince the workforce that redundancy measures are preferable for

-- the future of the company and for the (residual) employees' salaries. Like external mobility, also internal mobility is more willingly accepted by the Polish trade unions (although it was previously almost unknown, at the point that often the appointments were made by the single workshops). The 'market' logic is viewed with strong scepticism in Italy, but it is almost welcome in Poland, where even salary indexation should be subject – for the unions! – to the control of the 'market conditions'. Finally, still referring to the US as a model of modernity, the Polish wage differentials are, with unions' approval, closer to the US standards than to the Italian ones.³⁴

Possibly more 'modern' are the Italian unions only as regards the role of 'quality' in the production. This is, however, a rather spurious finding, since the Polish market altogether is less quality-oriented than the Italian one. It is therefore difficult to conclude whether the unions' orientations are due to 'quality' appreciation or to market acceptance.

3.1.3 Does modernity mean weakness?

It certainly remains disputable whether this form of openness is linked to a simple 'acquiescence' due to bargaining weakness, and therefore to a simple element of the neo-proletarian consciousness described in the previous chapter. In fact, when employers wish 'modern' and 'flexible' trade unions, they often simply mean 'weak' or 'acquiescent' unions. At a macro level, it may be argued that relatively weaker unions (like the Dutch ones) can be more ready to innovate than their stronger counterparts (like the British or the German ones). France and Sweden, however, would raise some doubts about it.

The analytical interpretation of the interviews suggests that weakness and openness to change are not the same. Beyond the proletarian factor, an inclination to *openness* rather than *refusal* remains in the Polish unions. This holds good also while controlling for the disturbance effect of the collaboration-opposition category, especially by considering the distinctive case of *Sierpień 80* which is definitely not a 'collaborative' union.

It is disputable whether the Polish trade unions are weaker than the Italian ones at the national level. All the variables (economic, institutional and political) usually used to measure union strength would rather argue for a Polish advantage. Notably:

economic growth is higher and unemployment (especially in the regions studied here) is lower; the law of 1991 protects the unions in the firms even more than the Italian *Statuto dei lavoratori* (1970) does, and in 1989 the employee councils had prerogatives none of the equivalent boards in the West has ever had; the party system could not be more union-friendly: both Left and Right (and not only the Centre-Left like in Italy until very recently) are linked to the unions (OPZZ and Solidarity respectively). Unionisation rate is similar in both countries. Only collective bargaining coverage is lower, but on the other hand Polish labour law is more inclusive than the Italian one (foreseeing for instance a minimum wage).

In the companies, Polish unions are not really weaker than the Italian ones. At Fiat Auto Poland union membership is higher than in Turin, and at Lucchini the control on the company's strategy is, though far from complete, higher than in Piombino where the unions are regularly surprised by the ownership's choices. The Polish unions from the steel sector take also part in the negotiations for the European Union enlargement, with substantial achievements.

A stronger disturbing variable is probably workers' turn-over, which is higher in Poland (especially in Warsaw) than in Italy and might explain why the Poles seem less 'locked into the past'. However, high turn-over itself is an indicator of marketisation, which is included in the definition of modernity employed here.

As to unions' quiescence, in the Hungarian and Slovenian cases it has been sharply commented that unions 'immaturity' is very useful for employers and highly functional in terms of market efficiency, for it secures a high level of work integration (Stanojevic 1999). This conclusion apparently contrasts with the explanation presented here. Actually, Stanojevic himself notes that unions' and companies' 'immature' organisational forms in Slovenia and Hungary manifest some striking similarities with the essential features of the HRM ideology. Even more, they seem to realise an unreachable ideal of the HRM strategy in the West. This point therefore, far from undermining the interpretation of the Polish unions as 'modern', reveals how ideological can be HRM and how many 'ancient' elements are present in the employers' discourse on modernity. There is not here the space to analyse this topic. The only important conclusion here is that the charges of conservatism addressed,

from the employers' ideological side, to the postcommunist unions are strikingly inconsistent: these unions are already much less conservative than the Western ones.

Ten years after the breakdown of communism, the image of Polish workers as among 'the most contentious of the world' (Ekiert and Kubik 1995) must be definitively abandoned. The levels of protest were high only in 1992-93, and even then were low if compared to the fall in real income in the first years of transition, a fall which although difficult to measure was without any doubt dramatic (Vaughan-Whitehead 1998; Milic-Czerniak 1998). Moreover, that wave of protest was never really against the reforms:

it was more common in this period for strikers to frame their demands around statements that they were in favour of reforms and restructuring, but that they wanted these programs to be implemented more quickly, more efficiently or with less corruption. (Timko 1996: 17)

On the basis of this analysis, the extraordinary success met in 1998 by the Polish government program of voluntary redundancy packages for the mining sector, which surprised most observers not least its authors, is absolutely understandable. Polish workers are not an obstacle on the way to the future: they are by contrast open to new challenges, at least when some opportunity is given to them and especially if compared with their Western colleagues.³⁵ The capability to think in terms of globalization and de-industrialisation seems inversely related to the rootedness of the national model. In this regard, Italian industrial unionism is probably at an advantage if compared to that in France, which is more anchored to the idea of a national pattern. But it is less well equipped than the Polish one, which, willy-nilly, has recognised the need to change.

An attentive exam reveals how the accusations of conservatism addressed to the Polish unions are internally contradictory. If one pursues the interpretation, would notice that the accusations stem from the experience of the Polish elites, preoccupied to justify the impressive gains obtained from the current transformation. The idea of Eastern European backwardness produces and perpetuates the subordination to external models. At the same time, after comparing Polish and Italian activists, one wonders that the former should still learn about the market from the latter.

After the investigation of the dominant views, it is now necessary to come back to the main topic of this thesis, that is the explanation of unionists' views.

3.2 A phenomenological explanation: the Polish 'alternation'

3.2.1 A fundamental re-socialisation

Ost and Weinstein (1999), through their fieldwork research on the Polish unions, also remarked a surprising support for market ideology. They showed how this cannot be explained either by rational choice approaches (in fact, unionists 'irrationally' support the eventual undermining of workers' and unions' rights) or by institutional ones (in fact, the employee councils work in disparate ways). They argue for an 'ideational' explanation, giving the decisive role to the liberal ideology embraced by the Polish activists. In short, 'unionists came to believe in capitalism simply because it was the enemy of their enemy' (30). Why the Poles think what they think, remains for Ost and Weinstein an open question. I shall use my evidence to propose an explanation of how these ideas have been constructed in the Polish unions. If one concentrates on the workshop level, these ideas are clearly not inherited from the '80s, when – as I argued in the previous chapters – egalitarianism and class consciousness were very strong.

In the interviews with Polish activists the experience of the so-called 'transition' is recurrent and central not only as a topic but also as a structuring element. Most judgements on the present as well as on the past refer to the breakdown of state-socialism and the subsequent changes. For instance, the old system is disqualified because condemned to failure (that is, giving a retroactive effect to a later event). The communist breakdown was not foreseen, or at least it was not expected to happen so rapidly. The activists, however, project their current historic knowledge to the past though recognising that society did not share this knowledge.

After martial law came in it was clear that this system had to fall, I even have witnesses that I had said this. I repeated that the economy can't endure, and I wasn't mistaken at all, I got it wrong by only one year, it happened in '89, I thought it would happen in 1990-91. [bs1]

Similarly, the image of the future is built around the necessity of change, which unlike in Italy has a strongly positive meaning. The best example is the demand for Western social security standards: the concrete examples indicate that the actual interest is in the preservation of communist-era benefits (e.g. company housing and holidays, or job security), but the justification discourse focuses rather on the West as

an ideal model. The frequent complaint '*unlike in the West*, here young people are hired with temporary contracts' is used instead of '*unlike in former times, ...*'. By contrast, the Italian justification structure is often centred on the past.

This does not mean that Polish workers are enthusiastic about the way the transition has been effectuated. They are often deceived and sometimes frustrated. Even in a position where very few stable evaluating references are available, they attempt to give a critical opinion on events. However, the 'transition' is criticised for its actual form but never rejected: it is accepted and defended as a necessary and foundational turning point. The disappointment is stronger with the 'transition' in the workplace and with the new employer. However, even the most negative opinions, mentioned below, ultimately accept the idea of change.

We started to talk about an Italian investor, among people appeared some hope of that Western life, known through films, TV. After, this Italian investor arrived and [with him] the brutal reality, brutal was the clash of our expectations with the reality which started to be in force here. I think that it is precisely as [it had occurred] in the West, but we didn't completely realise how the reality might look. There were enormous expectations, aspirations to that whole Western life. By contrast nobody expected that we had to... such an enormous effort to achieve all that. [hs8]

That at the national level there is this transformation, we move from are system to another, we would be able to get used to it, if only it weren't on such principles... [ta2]

In the West, all this was changed over a number of years, and basically they built that wealth, that fortune and so on. Here there is a mistake in the transformation, people were simply not ready, at a given moment they were thrown in the abyss. People simply don't know how to behave and everybody wants to save himself in some way on the surface, in order not to sink. [tz2]

Apart from the case of post-communist *Metalowcy*, which requires another historical explanation, only one example has been found (in the radical *Sierpień 80*) of apparent fundamental opposition to the change which occurred in 1989. However, this opposition seems also to be to the *betrayal* of the origins of change rather than to change itself.

Solidarity fought above all against communism, to make communism fall, to change the system, for instance in the Gdansk docks, so that these docks might be private, to change the system. And now what? The owner has changed, there is the State Treasury,³⁶ and all this change of system brought about that the docks close down. So now they have to change the direction of their action, of the struggles, no longer those economic changes, only saving this industry. [ta6]

In most cases, the idea of 'alternation', of a basic need to invert the situation is surprisingly enduring.

We see how the world looks, we are a country as we are, many people travel abroad and so on, and someday we'll arrive at that status of free man, who works, knows why he works, and what can he afford. [tz2]

I shall try to interpret this relatively very wide acceptance of the idea of change in spite of very hard conditions with the help of Berger and Luckmann's sociology of knowledge, of which the relevant points have been summarised in chapter 2.

The Polish and Italian change processes, in society and in the workplaces, recall two types of socialisation described by Berger and Luckmann (1967): respectively, re-socialization through alternation and secondary socialisation. The first one completely inverts the cognitive framework of the individual, and explicitly 'cuts' with the past. The second one, by contrast, tries to maintain as much continuity as possible with previous experiences, avoiding any drastic mutation and minimising change.

3.2.2 The features of alternation

A few features characterise *alternation* as the most radical form of re-socialisation. Post-communist transformation is indeed not as drastic as the purest type of alternation, that of religious conversion. The model of religious conversion may be applied perhaps to the particular case of the post-communist *Metalowcy* leadership, which is however not central in the discussion of the transformation of the worker movement. For the rest of the unions, almost all the elements of Berger and Luckmann's model appear in Poland, only in a slightly modified form. As the authors themselves noted, it is only a problem of degree. The most important characteristics of alternation are five:

- a legitimating apparatus;
- the repudiation of alternatives;
- the reinterpretation of the old reality;
- the presence of 'significant others';
- a plausibility structure.

The first feature of radical re-socialisation is the need for a legitimating apparatus, capable of justifying the new reality and the stages required to achieve it. In Eastern Europe an extremely powerful legitimating apparatus is the East-West contrast, which is sometimes exaggerated and almost always diverts attention from the

local history and 'path'. Any political or organisational proposal for change is presented with the foreword 'this is how things are in the West'. The advantage of this legitimating apparatus is a cost-reducing readiness to imitate. The limit is that though absolutely convincing on the general idea of change, it is less persuasive on the *stages*. However, the idea that to achieve Western standards it is necessary to go through a phase of 'XIX-century capitalism', in order to follow (hopefully faster) the same stages followed by the West, has become common sense, as the above mentioned extracts and many others suggest.

I know that people didn't realise the costs implied by this transformation. But nothing is for free, it can't be so that as soon as we change the system we're at once in America, we're far away from America. They spent two hundred years before reaching what they have from this democracy, we had two hundred years of slavery,³⁷ therefore two hundred years of gap, after the war too they gained and we lost, our rulers sold us exactly, almost fifty years of totalitarianism were wasted. [hs6]

The second element, directly proceeding from the previous one, is the repudiation of alternatives. The political debate in Poland does not take place between proponents and opponents of reforms, but between slightly different interpretations of the West as a model for change (Wydra 1997). The discussion on economic and social matters approximates a sort of '*pensée unique*' (to use a definition hurriedly conceived about the West but not unsuitable for the East). The historian Karol Modzelewski (1993) was one of the very few who, early in the process of change, denounced this 'refusal to consider alternatives'. Maintaining Berger and Luckmann's image of conversion, one might remember that the converted are always the most dogmatic believers. Even the activists who most strongly denounce the costs of transformation do not propose any real alternative, with the essentially marginal exception of the nationalist *Popieluszko*. It is interesting that the first challenges to the legitimating structure of the transformation do not come from the opponents of reform, but on the contrary from the earliest reformers. It was Leszek Balcerowicz, the hard-line liberal Finance Minister, who was the first to invert that legitimating structure by declaring (in 1998 about fiscal reform) 'we don't have to repeat the mistakes of Western Europe'. This may be seen as the outcome of the unavoidable impact of the utopian idea of the West as transformation justification and the actual reality of capitalist states.³⁸

Alternation implies additionally the reinterpretation of the old reality and past biography. Polish workers are deeply 'working' on their past, as compared with the Italian ones who repeat crystallised visions of the old times. The Polish vision of the past, as emerges also from Table 2, is much more critical than the Italian one. In the interviews, the higher the self-assurance about the direction of change, the worse the image of the past. Sometimes the reinterpretation even approaches the purest form described by Berger and Luckmann: the 'then I thought, now I know' formula.

Such were people's feelings [in the late '80s]: 'why should we attract somebody from abroad, if we can manage it alone?' What can we manage, what money can we put in? They didn't realise, unfortunately, the education being the way it was, the ordinary school³⁹ didn't educate people in the right direction. They only taught everything, and everything means nothing, because if at vocational school I had technical drawing for two years and the comrade language [i.e. Russian] for three years, this was paranoia. What does the comrade language help me in my career, if I don't have a vocational basic like technical drawing? (...)

Now times have changed, we should move to more professional [union] work, more competent, because formerly we declared 'we don't like it, so we strike', it was like that at the beginning of the '80s. And those strikes brought about, among other things, that we had to make the production again, unfortunately nobody wanted to talk and only after heavily beating... it was a necessity, and now we must change, we must start to speak on the basis of arguments. [hs6]

The fourth element indicated by Berger and Luckmann is the necessity of 'significant others', with whom the *alternating* subject develops a strongly affective identification. It is not easy to identify the significant others of post-Communist transformation. They are not the Western workers: as we have seen, union East-West cooperation is fragile and full of misunderstandings.⁴⁰ Certainly they are not foreign employers, vary rarely beloved, and even less politicians or intellectuals. A 'participating' look suggests instead that the unexpected significant others are Western consumers, and the consumption goods and services they choose. As a matter of fact, the country where alternation was most radical is Albania, where a true disintegration of the previous identity produced almost a shame to be Albanian and, the other side of the coin, violent nationalist feelings. This disintegration is not explained only by the particularly rigid nature of the previous regime: Romania or the Soviet Union were also tyrannical. It is to a large extent the outcome of the very strong role played by the Western media (and especially Italian TV advertising) in the country of the eagles. In no other country has the contrast between the two poles of alternation been so extreme and palpable. In Poland Western goods, advertised by the

media and massively imported in the first months of transition, are known much better than Western work conditions or welfare systems. This is the channel through which the country knows its goals and justifies them.

This brings us to the last point, the plausibility structure, which connects all the previous elements and offers a framework for the everyday common knowledge. As follows from the previous point, the plausibility structure is probably the market considered as a system to calculate the value of goods, services, and – regrettably – people too. Although markets were not unknown in the socialist system, monetary marketization has been a brusque experience. Money has rapidly substituted a number of other resources which were formerly more important: time, acquaintances, group belonging. Moreover, the experience of marketization, exalted by the hyperinflation of the first months of transformation, rapidly imposed new parameters for the evaluation of anything in everyday life (Kolarska-Bobińska 1993). This explains why Polish workers speak for so long about money if compared not only to the relatively rich workers of the West, but also to the poorest strata of Western society. Finally, since the comparison of salaries is the first matter raised by workers in non-directive interviews when speaking about their Italian colleagues, this plausibility structure phenomenologically emerges as a (possibly *the*) structuring element of the East-West divide.

In conclusion, current union consciousness does not seem anchored in the past; quite the opposite, it is interwoven with the idea of radical change which inverted the reference values. This may explain how the same activists, who in the '80s used a rhetoric of strength and pride, now adopt a neo-proletarian rhetoric. They see their current position, even when it has not really worsened that much, through the lens of social change which has transformed the 'pillars' of socialism into old-fashioned, often redundant residues.

It may be noticed that the argument I exposed here uses an extra-work experience (alternation) as an explanatory factor for a differentiation taking place *at work*. Once the experience of work is no longer in a position to assign meaning to social actors, we have to leave the workplace to make sense of it. This point will be important in the fifth chapter on the sources of trade union commitment.

What has been described does not account, however, for the totality of the post-communist experience. The alternation model presented in *The Social Construction of Reality* represents the extreme case of re-socialization, it tells how Eastern European change *should have been*. However, in the case of complex societies, unlike that of the individuals who are the reference for Berger and Luckmann, it is impossible to cut all the links with the past. A thorough and abrupt discontinuity is not accomplished. The result is the problem of maintaining a minimum of consistency with the remains of the past, which was noted in numerous interview extracts, for instance on the issue of the representation of the opponent. Several problems arise for today's Eastern Europe and for the acceptance of the stages of transformation. Nevertheless, the goals remain indisputable: the investigation of the re-socialisation pattern explains that attitude of Solidarity which has been defined as 'desperately seeking capitalism' by surprised Western scholars (Hardy and Rainnie 1995).

Returning to the interviews, the drastic form of marketization in Poland may explain the economicism which I have described above. This economicism, outside the peculiar industrial setting of Tychy, *phenomenologically* pushes the Polish workers away from class faster than the Italian ones. The most consistent aspect is the justification of economic demands, explicitly shifting from class to consumption references.

The problem is that in this country people earn too little money. These salaries are really not too high if compared to living costs, *I am not saying if compared to the executed work, I am saying to living costs.* [hs6]

3.2.3 The Italian secondary socialisation

Although the alternation of Eastern Europe is not ideal-typical, it remains very different from the recent experience of Italian workers. The Italians have managed to subjectively minimise change at both work and political level. A good example is that of the fall of communism.

Somebody smartly made fun of us, 'poor you, the failure of communism'. But in fact it was a reflection which had already started in the '70s with Berlinguer.⁴¹ These were not radical changes, they had already been started by Berlinguer. [mf6]

There is no critical revision of the past, but on the contrary self-justification and a preservation of continuity. The present is in turn interpreted in a continuous relationship with the past. Not only does the current political discourse follow the rhetoric of the '70s, but changes in work organisation are also minimised (this is also true of the employer, who intelligently issues different propaganda than in Poland). In this way Italian activists have safeguarded resources which the Poles have lost, but at the cost of remaining locked into an old model, and of greater difficulties in their relations with the youngest workers. This also explains why the Italian configurations of consciousness (Figure 1 in chapter 3) are less disparate and distant than the Polish ones, although both substantially move away from class consciousness.

Of course, recent Italian change is *objectively* less deep than that in Poland: the political crisis and the economic reforms, though important, did not have the dramatic meaning of the Polish ones. However, what is here important is to state that these experiences of change bring about different *perceptions* of reality, and that it is these perceptions, more than the structural factors themselves, that primarily affected trade union consciousness. This subjective approach may explain why Poles appear in some respects more modern than the Italians. The apparently 'primitive' economicism of the Poles acquires the opposite meaning. There is not a natural trend from material to post-material needs, as suggested by Maslow. Actually, if one observes the changes in collective bargaining as well as in workers' orientations in Italy, salaries are becoming increasingly important. That is, Italians are slowly adapting to a subjective reality already brusquely encountered by the Poles.

The alternation-based explanation of Polish reality which has been drafted above is an alternative to the two 'paradigms' through which – as shown in chapter 2 – the post-communist world is normally seen: that of transition, teleological and centred in the future, and that of legacy and path-dependency, centred in the past. The phenomenological approach used here focuses instead on the current experience of change: it emerges that the actual behaviour of actors is coherent neither with their traditions nor with the prospective goals of 'transition', but only with the transformation itself. At the same time, Polish workers' behaviour differs from that of their Italian counterparts, who experience secondary socialisation instead of

alternation, and are therefore more rooted in the past: 'the reality-base for re-socialization is the present, for secondary socialization is the past' (Berger and Luckmann 1966: 182).

4. The dualisation process

4.1 The East-West category

Two main elements have emerged from the Italy-Poland comparison: a sort of neo-proletarian identity among the Poles, and a higher degree of resistance to change among the Italians. These two findings are not in conflict: the axis proletarian vs. proud identity is independent from the modernisation vs. conservatism one. Phenomenologically, the two findings are even interconnected: in Poland, self-distancing from the West is at the same time a legitimating apparatus for change and a basis for inferiority feelings. In this last section I shall briefly attempt to discuss whether this difference may become a ground for a broader divergence between the Italian and Polish societies.

As with other issues, I shall start the discussion with a short reference to the interviews. The distinction between East and West is apparently a meaningful category for workers. They do not speak of it often, but whenever they do, it is in a self-confident way. In only two interviews, with activists of the militant, working-class *Sierpień 80*, is the distinction denied in the idea that workers in East and West experience common problems. In most cases, the distinction is self-evident, especially for the Poles.

In the firms with foreign capital we've got Western work and Eastern salary (...). We aspire to arrive at the Western standard of living, but we don't know when. And this is what hurts most. [hs1]

This happens in Western Germany, in Eastern Germany they have poverty, terrible poverty. Everything depends on the occupation, the American one. Look, one wall divides them and this is heaven and hell. Now they've unified it but it decays anyway. [ta5]

Central-Eastern Europe is commonly represented as moving on the road to integration with the West. Economic integration is indeed growing, and political integration is also progressing even though at a progressively slowing pace. However, precisely this convergence makes the enduring differences more visible and

problematic. In this regard, the experience of multinational companies is particularly important: while they contribute to integration in a number of fields (e.g. technology), they may also introduce new differences and consolidate them.

At Fiat Auto Poland working conditions are not that much harder than in the Western plants: although automation is in some positions reduced, the rhythms and the pauses are the same and the environmental conditions are sometimes even better. The distinguishing factor is the different path of work reorganisation: in Poland, traditional Taylorism was strengthened at the same time as it was being dismantled in Italy.

The evidence from other multinational companies operating in the post-communist countries confirms this impression. At Thomson-Polkolor, in the Warsaw suburbs, it has been noted that:

Dans la gestion ouvrière de la main-d'oeuvre, le système de punition et de récompense de l'absentéisme et des performances reprend des traditions autoritaires qui n'ont plus cours dans les filiales occidentales du groupe. (Durand, Le Goff and Tobera 1997: 144)

At General Motors Hungary, compared with other transplants in Western Europe, there is a less democratic and more management controlled team concept. In Hungary team leaders are not elected and controlled by the teams, and there are fewer possibilities to increase job-content and to acquire multi-skilling (Tóth 1996b). Similar conclusions may be drawn from research carried out on the General Motors plant in Eisenach, in the former GDR (Jürgens 1995), on Italo-Hungarian joint ventures (Makó and Simonyi 1995), and on the overall attitudes of multinational companies towards the trade unions in Hungary (Makó and Novoszáth 1995). Most striking is the case of Suzuki Hungary, where the unions had a very bad time before managing to organise (Tóth 1996a). Incidentally, it does not seem coincidental that Hungary is both the Eastern European country which has attracted most foreign investment and that with the least labour-friendly legislation.

In fact, the East-West differences within multinational companies relate not only to work organisation, but also to the management attitude towards unions. In Poland, in the green-field US-owned factories of General Motors (Gliwice), Pepsico (Szczecin) and Levi-Strauss (Plock) the trade unions are still absent (in spite of their repeated efforts to establish themselves). Pepsico management even organised an

intensive campaign against the trade unions, charging them with ruining Polish industry. Even more striking is the situation of a Norwegian-based multinational, where a trade union was in the end permitted, but on the condition of remaining detached from Solidarity. This circumstance is symptomatic of the tendency by multinational capital to create work settings not influenced by the national context. This is not an easy goal, however: in the above-mentioned Norwegian company the union, forced to be formally independent, maintains informal links with Solidarity, in a sort of revival of underground activity.⁴²

This gap is not without consequences. In the plants I studied, there is a high potential for an interest opposition between Eastern and Western workers. To give an interesting example of how the distinction from the West may be perceived, I shall quote the account of a former Solidarity officer, who was a union advisor during the strike at *Huta Lucchini* in 1994, was later engaged by Lucchini, and currently works in a consulting company.

During that half year I worked in Piombino for Lucchini, unfortunately I saw that other side, that other, sadder part of the truth, which later on the Italians did not hide anymore. Lucchini strengthened his own capital, he financially strengthened himself since the moment of the *Huta* take-over. Basically, we sold him Peru. We were Peru and he simply made money and from that moment he started to make serious investments in Italy, he bought Piombino, he bought all the big steelworks. Lucchini was known for being the boss of the employers in Brescia, up to 1992 he had two firms, which counted together less than 3,000 people, such small steelworks. Now the group has about 9,000 people. (Gilejko, Gieorgica and Ruszkowski 1997: 96)

History offers abundant evidence for stating that not only is the market insufficient on its own to prompt integration, it may also become a cause of divergence. 130 years of a unified Italian national market have not been sufficient to overcome the economic distance between the North and the South, and on the political and cultural level have eventually produced the *Lega Nord*. 8 years of German unification have brought the gap in the unemployment rate between old and new *Bundesländer* from 4.9 to 9.3%,⁴³ and the PDS electoral score in the latter from 11.1% to 21.6% (in 1990 most observers actually thought that the PDS would have quickly disappeared). Similar fears of centrifugal counter-reactions have been expressed within the European Union, especially about monetary convergence, which, on this view, might produce as its complement a social divergence between classes and regions (Alvater and Mahnkopf 1995). These fears have been up to now only

fears, but eastward enlargement might make them real. Although Poland (like most of the post-communist countries aspiring to enter the European Union) has signed the European Social Chart already in 1997, the actual social and cultural model currently *in statu nascendi* is quite distinctive.

The political and social construction of the East-West category as a divide in identities and behaviour patterns, encountered in the Polish and Italian plants of the Fiat and Lucchini groups, is not yet representative of broader societal trends. Nevertheless, it calls attention to the problem of dualisation.

4.2 A broader review of the Polish unionism

4.2.1 The choice of 'critical' control cases

It has to be verified whether the observations made about the Fiat and Lucchini cases may be extended to Polish unionism as a whole. In a situation of increasing differentiation and decreasing significance of industrial relations models, any conjecture about a societal pattern is risky. This argument, however, does not allow us to avoid the question: since a societal variable (alternation) has been put at centre of the analysis, the impact of this variable on the rest of the society has to be tested. Several 'national' features have already been mentioned in order to connect case studies and societal frameworks. Nonetheless, an exploratory test was still necessary and therefore the unions of a few other selected cases have been considered, though more superficially. In the plants listed in Table 3 conversations were carried out with union officers and activists, along with analysis of union documents and some moments of participant observation.

The first, theoretical aim of enlarging the fieldwork was to answer two questions raised by the previous research:

- 1) whether the 'neo-proletarian' element is peculiar to Italian transplants (or even only to the two Italian transplants considered), as they display a particularly paternalistic and adversarial management style;⁴⁴
- 2) whether the 'change-oriented' element is peculiar to the privatised companies, and not representative of the majority of industrial workers still employed in the state sector.

Table 3 - Supplementary case-studies

| Company name | Localisation | Workforce | Production | Ownership | Unions present *directly analysed |
|-------------------|----------------------------|-----------|----------------------|----------------|--|
| Danone | Warsaw | 400 | Dairying | French | -Solidarity* -Dairying Independent T.U. (OPZZ) |
| Danone | Bieruń Stary (Silesia) | 400 | Dairying | French | -Solidarity* -Shift Workers' T.U.* |
| Ursus | Warsaw | 5,900 | Tractors | State Treasury | -Solidarity* -Metalowcy (OPZZ)* -Popieluszeko -Engineers and Technicians' T.U. |
| Daewoo | Warsaw | 9,000 | Cars | South Korean | -Solidarity* -Metalowcy -Solidarity 80* -Engineers and Technicians' T.U. |
| Petrochemia Plock | Plock (Mazovia) | 7,400 | Refinery | State Treasury | -Solidarity* -Refinery Workers' T.U. (OPZZ) -Solidarity 80* -National Solidarity 80 -Engineers and Technicians' T.U. |
| Bizon-New Holland | Plock (Mazovia) | 1,200 | Agriculture Machines | Italian | -Solidarity* -Metalowcy (OPZZ) -Engineers and Technicians' T.U. |
| Cotex | Plock (Mazovia) | 1,200 | Textile | State | -National Solidarity 80* -Solidarity* -Textile Industry T.U. (OPZZ) -Foremen's T.U. |
| Galbani-Danone | Casale Cremasco (Lombardy) | 300 | Dairying | French | -Flai-Cgil* -Fat-Cisl* |

These questions – as a thorough exploration of Polish reality remains beyond our possibilities – may best be confronted by choosing extreme cases, that is those with the least favourable conditions for the confirmation of the hypothesis. Accordingly, two cases are required: on the one hand a foreign- but not Italian-owned company with a reputation of being socially-oriented; on the other, a state-owned company with unions considered to be particularly conservative or even reactionary.

The first case is represented by Danone, a French-owned company particularly present in Eastern Europe and traditionally considered as socialist-supporting. The group founder Antoine Riboud was a friend of François Mitterrand and has been

defined as 'progressive' for favouring (in opposition to the French tradition) strong and well-organised trade unions in a counter-power role, which the company needs in order to develop (Guarriello and Jobert 1992).⁴⁵ Danone allows in addition a supplementary comparison with Italian plants to be made, in order to test the weight of the employer's nationality.

The second extreme case is that of the Ursus tractor factory, in the Warsaw suburbs. This plant is very well known for its historical role (site of the 1976 unrest, which gave rise to the KOR⁴⁶) as well as for its current political character. The local Solidarity organisation, led by a famous extreme-right activist, Zygmunt Wrzodak, has been widely accused of nationalism, anti-Semitism, and even fascism (by the regional Solidarity president Jankowski himself). In a street demonstration in 1995 Ursus workers cried 'communists to the gas', and in 1998 they burnt European Union flags under the Finance Ministry buildings (I carried out participant observation in several Ursus street demonstrations between 1995 and 1998). In 1997 Solidarity refused to agree to the entry of a foreign investor, a US company among the world leaders in the sector. Today, Ursus is still state-owned and Solidarity demands tractor import to be blocked.

Besides these critical cases, other companies have been considered with a more 'exploratory' purpose. This includes first of all another important multinational company, Daewoo, which took over the FSO car factory in Warsaw. This case is not only parallel to the Fiat one from the productive point of view (automotive sector). It is historically important, since it was a fortress of the works councils in 1956 and also had an important role in 1980. Moreover, FSO Solidarity in the '80s cooperated intensively with the Turin unions. The importance is also strategic: Daewoo is using Eastern Europe, where it might soon become the leading car producer, as a 'Trojan horse' to enter the European common market.

Moreover, in order not to avoid a geographical bias (all the plants considered up to now are based either in Warsaw or in the Katowice voïvodships), the unions of three important enterprises of Płock in Central Poland have been included: Petrochemia Płock, New Holland, and Cotex. Petrochemia Płock is the second biggest Polish company in terms of turn-over, and the biggest fuel producer in Central and

Eastern Europe. It is theoretically important as a case of a state company not in a ruinous situation, where in addition the unions have played an important role as promoters at restructuring. New Holland (formerly Bizon) produces agricultural machines and was taken over by foreign capital (Fiat group) in 1996; its situation is interesting in comparison to Ursus, given the similarity of production. Cotex, finally, is a state-owned textile factory with 1,200 employees (80% women), theatre of some extremely tough work conflict (four months of occupation) and an interesting case of a women's revolt (the factory was visited during the occupation), which will be discussed in chapter 5. Finally, information has been collected, through the Solidarity foreign department in Gdansk, on a number of other foreign companies.

4.2.2 Danone

The Danone case was analysed through long unstructured interviews with unionists and other 'qualified observers' from the plants of Warsaw and Bieruń Stary (Silesia), taken over in 1996. In Italy the Galbani plant in Casale Cremasco (Lombardy), taken over by Danone in 1990, was considered. In addition, information was collected also from the French CGT in Paris.

Danone's 'social' reputation is confirmed, in Italy, by the particularly 'soft' management of layoffs, through the policy of 'out-placing' (Viacelli 1994). Also in Poland the social package is significantly above the Polish standards, and includes sport facilities and leisure activities. In Poland, industrial relations appear, especially in the plant of Bieruń Stary, much more 'quiet' than at Lucchini or Fiat. In both countries the work environment is exceptionally clean and safe, and although this is certainly due to the specificity of the product (yoghurt and cheese) the unionists notice a considerable improvement from the pre-Danone times.

Nevertheless, it had already been noted by French sociologists that Danone, a plant with a definitely 'ethnocentric' pattern of management, considers that in the East an 'authoritarian' command is indispensable to achieve rapid change (Durand 1997). In Poland, relations with the unions are, though generally quiet, not without conflicts, especially in Warsaw. It is important to notice that the plant of Bieruń Stary was built in 1986 and therefore did not see the 'first' Solidarity and lacks a labour movement

tradition. In Italy conflicts are more 'open', and there are short strikes from time to time.

The main difference noted between the two countries is the presence in Poland of a parallel form of plant-level employees' representation, special 'Danone Committees' created by the company. According to Solidarity activists in Warsaw, the aim of these Committees is to eliminate the unions. Some rivalry emerges also from the account of a Warsaw Committee member who was also interviewed (and interestingly enough had never been interested in union activity before). The management attitude towards these committees is described as much more friendly than that towards the unions. Extensive training for the Committees' members is organised and financed by the company. Remarkably, the Poles were told that these Committees are implemented by Danone everywhere, while neither in France nor in Italy is there anything similar. Generally, the unions complain about the lack of information on the 'global' situation of the group.

Wages are kept beyond the competence of this Committee. This policy apparently contrasts with the Fiat preference for concentrating collective bargaining on wages. Actually, the two lines converge in a unique effect: pushing the unions to care only about wages, neglecting the other issues. As a matter of fact, the Polish workers and unions appear much more concerned with wages than the Italians, coherently with the hypothesis of a specifically Polish 'economicism'. This happens even in Warsaw, in spite of the fact that salaries there are about 40% higher than those of a twin plant in Lublin taken over by a US investor. In Italy, by contrast, wages, though important, are secondary for the unions if compared with work rhythms.

The other characteristic element of Polish union consciousness exists: the feeling of weakness. Although more satisfied about employment and industrial relations than their Fiat or Lucchini colleagues (something which is also due to the different economic sector), the Polish activists express palpable feelings of weakness and of having been weakened in comparison with the past. In particular, they report a general workers' fear of striking (at least in Warsaw) and even of joining a union (in both plants).

No sign of transnational union cooperation was found. This is surprising as Danone was one of the first MNCs to create a EWC and to take the first steps towards European-level collective bargaining and 'has arguably the most advanced of all transnational information and consultation arrangements' (European Work Councils' Bulletin 1997, 10: 4). In fact, the EWC does not include Polish employees' representatives, and the only transnational contacts are restricted to a narrow elite. In Italy, members of the EWC are office workers detached from the productive plants. In Poland, the union officer who took part in meetings in Brussels never reported to her organisation or to the employees she represented. On the occasion of the last European meeting only Solidarity was informed, and too late to participate. What is more, Polish representatives would not have had their travel expenses refunded by the employer. They also met the problem of finding a translator in order to understand the information and had to contact the regional union offices for this. In Casale, globalization is condemned in generic terms like in Piombino but not really examined. In France, according to a CGT officer, there is even a widespread fear among the employees about possible transplants in Eastern Europe.

In Poland, the contacts between the two plants of Warsaw and Bieruń Stary, and with the employees of the retailing structure are also very weak and difficult. The company did not want the unions from the two plants to meet before the negotiations of the company collective agreement. In Italy the situation in this respect is better: there is group co-ordination and retail workers are paradoxically more unionised than average. However, in the same village of Casale Cremasco the unions from the two neighbouring plants Danone and Galbani-Danone do not cooperate and meet very rarely.

The non-Italian nature of Danone allows the issue of Polish 'nationalism' to be assessed. In Poland, opposition towards the new investor displays, although less violently, the same nationalist features as at Fiat and Lucchini. In particular arguments like the following are used: 'for them whatever is French is good', 'they don't know Polish law', 'in this country they're guests but they behave as landlords', 'they're incapable of taking decisions without asking Paris'. The same arguments have been found at Fiat, Huta Lucchini, and Daewoo. However, in Italy the same themes also

appear, with only secondary rhetorical differences. In particular, exactly the same complaint was reported in Warsaw and in Casale Cremasco about the fact that the French management chooses French machines while the German ones have a much better reputation. In any case, national questions are evidently not the main concern of the unions. In Bieruń Stary this is also proved by past experience: before the Danone take-over (in 1996) there had been a resolute union mobilisation against the previous Polish private investor, who was eventually rejected from the plant while Danone was later accepted in a referendum almost unanimously.

Trends towards fragmentation and dualisation are confirmed by other elements. Everywhere gaps in employment conditions between 'seniors' and 'juniors', men and women, permanent and seasonal workers, and especially Danone and 'subcontracted' employees are denounced. In this regard, the Danone case does not confirm the hypothesis of the Polish unions as better equipped when facing differentiation. The difficulties are basically similar, and solidarity with the subcontracted employees is even higher in Casale Cremasco where the Danone unions are able to go on strike to defend them. In Bieruń Stary the shift workers (about 100) had to create their own union to defend their particular professional prerogatives. The situation with respect to the gender gap is also complex. Women in Warsaw make up 50% of all employees and the large majority of productive workers; nevertheless, they constitute only 10% of Solidarity (the most active union) membership, and the Solidarity executive is entirely male.⁴⁷ However, the leader of the second union is a woman and in Bieruń Stary women even constitute a majority on the Solidarity executive.

As to attitudes towards change and modernisation, Danone by contrast confirms what has been written before on 'alternation'. In Poland the representation of the past by union officers is absolutely negative. In Italy, by contrast, the unions complain for instance about the loss of health resorts for thermal treatment. This point also suggests that the peculiarly Eastern European tie to established social packages is largely a myth.

Culturally, the Polish unions seem more 'modern' than the Italian ones, but this finding is certainly biased by the rural location of the Italian plant analysed. In

Casale Cremasco the debate between Cgil and Cisl recalls a 'Don Camillo and Peppone' atmosphere, as if nothing had changed since the post-war period. During a meeting with me, Cgil and Cisl activists repeatedly accused each other of 'coming from Novosibirsk' and of 'being catholic fundamentalists'. When a Cisl activist started to praise the Pope's social thought, he was interrupted by his Cgil colleague who argued that the victory of capitalism was also the Pope's fault: 'he wakes up now with the problems of capitalism; he should have thought about it before dismantling communism'. In none of the plants I visited throughout Poland have I ever heard a debate of this kind.

One further point is that the attention to and the value placed on training opportunities are higher in Poland than in Italy. This is also true for language training, which confirms that there is not withdrawal into nationalism.

4.2.3 Ursus

Investigating the Ursus trade unions was not easy. In particular it was important to define Solidarity: if even this plant executive, the most violently nationalist in Poland, were found to be relatively open to change, the hypothesis could be strongly demonstrated *a fortiori*. This was not the case. After repeated contacts, the local leader openly refused to talk to me or to organise any meeting with activists with the following justification: 'you are not a Pole and therefore we strongly suspect you of working for foreign intelligence or other anti-Polish interest groups'. This statement is eloquent enough to make any further investigation of the Ursus Solidarity leadership redundant.

Given the strongly centralised and rigid organisation of Ursus Solidarity, access to the shop-stewards and most well-known activists was then impossible.⁴⁸ It was possible, however, to talk with Solidarity rank and file during street demonstrations. Some of these conversations were recorded.

The main finding, contrasting with the schematic image given by the Polish media, is of a differentiated range of opinions among the workforce. From the talks (which took place during street demonstrations, and therefore in a social situation strongly favouring the expression of radical discourses) it emerges that Wrzodak's nationalist attitude is not dominant. It concerns only a core of the union in one

workshop (the assembly line, strategically important indeed) of the Warsaw plant. The majority of the workers, and seemingly a large proportion of the Solidarity members, support Wrzodak only occasionally and instrumentally, displaying a striking awareness of the logic of 'political exchange'. In this sense, these workers appear, in spite of the reactionary ideas of their representative, as in their own way 'modern'.

It was possible by contrast to meet officers and activists from the second union, the post-communist *Metalowcy*. The Ursus plant in Warsaw in this regard is completely different from Fiat, Danone, and even the other Ursus plant in Lublin (Eastern Poland). In all these other situations the post-communist unions are seen as more or less 'collaborative'.

In the Ursus plant in Warsaw there has recently been a role exchange. Solidarity (the biggest union with about 3,000 members) has kept a dominant control power, repeatedly changing the general directors of the company since 1991 and rejecting several restructuring measures. By 1998 it had imposed a friendly director, who for instance supports the union's strikes against the government stating, like in March 1998, that 'between management and unions the goals are the same, only the means are different'. Since then Solidarity has supported the new restructuring plan, involving massive layoffs and a radical process of outsourcing: the workforce was reduced from 12,000 to 6,000 in the first year, with an objective of 1,200 in the next future. In the plans, only the assembly line (Wrzodak's workshop) should remain. The *Metalowcy* (720 members), instead, have moved to purely 'union' tasks, rejecting political and management concerns. The other two unions (Popieluszeko and Engineers and Technicians' T.U.) are quite marginal.

In 1999, a dispute started between the two unions, with even the threat of a strike by *Metalowcy* against Solidarity. *Metalowcy* accuses the Solidarity-controlled management of dismissing (and 'outsourcing') in the first place the members of the other unions, and of 'saving' their own members. Accordingly, this would explain the recent increase in Solidarity membership and even the 'double membership' of some employees. In addition, *Metalowcy* complains about the social costs of the restructuring plan. These would have been easier to bear, in their opinion, if reorganisation had started four years earlier, but at that time Solidarity opposed it.

Metalowcy also support the need to finding a foreign strategic investor (which Solidarity resolutely refuses) as a long-term solution.

This complex situation (made even more puzzling by the different case of the Lublin plant, where it is by contrast *Metalowcy* and, surprisingly, Solidarity 80 who support the management) confirms the importance of the experience of conflict for union consciousness. The lack of a shopfloor opponent after 1989 pushed Solidarity, by far the strongest union, into an 'anti-social movement', fighting against imaginary Jews and spies, and eventually into management substitution. Solidarity even created a seemingly profitable co-operative society dealing with Ursus spare parts distribution. By contrast *Metalowcy* was forced to take on the role of the employees' defender. This role was not that familiar for them, as the activists and officers themselves reveal by telling of their uneasiness and nostalgia. In a peculiar way, the 'communist legacies' of both unions were inverted by specific 'alternation' dynamics.

As to the issue of differentiation, in Ursus there are important rivalries between the Warsaw plant and the smaller factory of Lublin, where wages are about 40% lower. The process of outsourcing is starting and is changing the power relations in the company, but until now *Metalowcy* has maintained a unified representation avoiding dualisation effects.

4.2.4 Daewoo

In the Daewoo factory in Warsaw, formerly FSO working under Fiat licence, it is difficult to evaluate the presence of conflict. FSO was taken over by Daewoo in 1996, after the unions had rejected an offer by General Motors proposing redundancy for 70% of the employees and the preservation of the only assembly line workshop. At the moment of privatisation a (quite generous for the employees) social pact and a collective agreement were signed, stating a 3-year moratorium on layoffs and a 5-year moratorium on strikes (the disparity itself indicates uneven power relations). As a result there has not been *open* conflict until the end of the moratorium in 1999. It should also be remembered that Daewoo (unlike Fiat, although many argue that the Italian company has also benefited from important political help) has received for the transition period conspicuous financial support from the state. This was intended to compensate for the fact that FSO, unlike FSM which was taken over by Fiat, was not

deeply indebted: the financial point of departure of the two enterprises was different and this makes a comparison difficult.

In fact, only a year after privatisation conflict about wage increases broke out. In some other plants of the Daewoo group, like in Łódź, conflict has also taken adversarial forms. In Warsaw, although no strike has been called, the unions have organised rallies on various issues, but especially in support of wage demands.

In 1999, after the end of the moratorium, all the plant unions started to express serious preoccupation. This concerned primarily redundancy and outsourcing plans, but not only. The unions unanimously denounced delays in the investment plans, discrimination practices at work, unilateral work time organisation. In the Summer they held a referendum among the workforce, in which 96% of the workers said that Daewoo did not realise the expectations it had created, and 89% said to be ready to take part in industrial action in case of collective dismissals.

The strongest (3,000 members) and most active trade union is Solidarity. In this union there are voices explicitly regretting the choice of the investor, albeit not the idea of privatisation and restructuring. In particular, it is argued that Daewoo is actually surreptitiously reducing the workforce, via outsourcing.

The other three unions, Solidarity 80 (around 800 members), *Metalowcy* (600), and Engineers and Technicians' T.U. (500), are conversely more 'pacific'. This is surprising for Solidarity 80, which emerged from an essentially political split with Solidarity but which in the plant is more moderate. In any case, none of the unions has the adversarial nature of *Sierpień 80* at Fiat. Even Solidarity is not hostile to the employer, as is confirmed by the agreement between the union and Daewoo to publish a company supplement in the weekly union magazine *Tygodnik Solidarność*.

Although it is too early to evaluate the 'intensity' of conflict, it is possible to analyse its subjective forms.

Opposition to the new investor, when it emerges, makes use of nationalist arguments like in the other foreign-owned companies ('they lay the blame on the translators', 'they don't know Polish laws' etc.). The existence of 'cultural barriers' is denounced, but they are not defined in any way. Opposition, however, never betrays racist feelings, even if in the case of South Koreans this might have happened. This

remains valid also for Solidarity 80, though this union makes a stronger use of nationalist rhetoric in the definition of its own identity.

Historical references are used more often than nationalist ones. Just like the activists from Fiat and Lucchini, the Daewoo unionists from Solidarity and Solidarity 80 construct a continuity between the former and current employer, 'inverting' the labels. The South Koreans are then charged with being 'even more communist' than the previous management: they are 'centralised', 'undemocratic', 'value loyalty above all'. The permanence of the former directors is condemned: 'these are people who cheat but who are loyal, and this is the most important thing for both communists and South Koreans'.

Daewoo is a profitable case for evaluating the chances of transnational union action. Solidarity cooperated closely with the Italian unions until 1990. Today, Solidarity and Solidarity 80 have negative opinions about Western unions, the Italian ones included. There is no cooperation with the official South Korean unions, with whom the company itself organised a meeting. The mistrust towards the latter however seems justified, since the South Korean unions proposed sharing information on 'how to increase productivity'. More significantly, Daewoo managed in 1997 to mobilise the company unions in demonstrations against the entry to Poland of its competitor Hyundai, by threatening layoffs as a reprisal if this happened. This would confirm the worst labour fears about globalisation.

The situation is, however, different in the two unions. Solidarity 80, uniquely in Poland, explicitly considers transnational action useless ('we don't have anything to learn from the Italians, we know our adversary pretty well'). Solidarity, by contrast, is actively involved in different international networks, like the International and the European Metalworkers' Federations. Moreover, they have contacts with the Romanian anticommunist Fratia from the Romanian Daewoo plant. They even organised training in Romania, 'like the Dutch previously trained us'.

4.2.5 Two industrial companies in Płock

Finally, two companies from a small-sized town, in a region with unemployment at 16%, were analysed. In these cases only Solidarity was considered,

as it is by far the strongest union. In both cases Solidarity played an important role in the restructuring process.

At Petrochemia restructuring was carried out between 1994 and 1999. The first plan having been rejected by the unions, the final one was jointly managed by Solidarity. Massive layoffs were avoided, and the workforce reduction was relatively limited (from 9,000 to 7,200). The state gave important temporary help through protectionist measures. Now, Petrochemia, in a promising situation, is starting to search for a foreign investor but 'without hurry' and therefore with relatively high bargaining power. It already is, without foreign capital, the second Polish company (after Telekomunikacja Polska) for investments in 1998 (source: Institute of Economic Sciences, Polish Academy of Sciences). Petrochemia is itself operating a strategic investment by the take-over of CPN, the first company for fuel retailing in Poland; this operation, welcome by the Petrochemia workforce, is by contrast resisted by CPN Solidarity, fearing massive redundancy among CPN employees.

At Bizon restructuring was more complex and painful. The factory was in a desperate situation in 1990: sales had fallen from 1,000 to 300 combine harvesters per year and indebtedness was very high. Proceeding at a feverish pace, however, restructuring took the company to the break-even point, and in 1998 it was taken over by the Fiat-owned New Holland. During the restructuring Solidarity (the biggest union with a membership around 40%) had mostly operated under the form of a works council, returning to the union role after privatisation. Unlike at Petrochemia, group layoffs were unavoidable and the workforce was reduced by about 50%, to the current 1,200. However, some social criteria, and especially individual chances on the labour market, were taken into account. In that way, the oldest employees were safeguarded while the owners of small pieces of land (the typically Polish *chłopo-robotnicy*, i.e. peasant-workers) were dismissed first. Wages also had to be reduced during restructuring, almost to the minimum level, but a degree of equality was maintained: administrators were even deposed for having increased their own salaries. In Spring 1999 the company made further 150 employees redundant, because of a negative situation of the world market in general, and of the Russian crisis in particular. The

unions negotiated the forms of the lay-offs without opening a conflict. This was the occasion for the first meetings and exchanges with the Western unions.

Although fragmented, the evidence from the supplementary case-studies allows us to sketch a first picture of Polish unionism, probably better than a larger but more superficial survey would do. In particular, the choice of critical and significant cases allows us to 'reject' or 'not to reject' previously formulated hypotheses as well as counterhypotheses.

Firstly, not only Danone but also the more critical case of Daewoo and to some extent *even* Ursus confirm that fears about xenophobic reactions by the Polish unions are exaggerated. Secondly, elements of a 'neo-proletarian' rhetoric and of 'economicism', as well as divergent trends in human resources management, appear *even* at Danone. Thirdly, again *even* at Danone trade-union transnational action is limited. Finally, the unions positively react to change *even* in state-owned, indebted companies in peripheral areas like Plock.

By contrast, the evidence rejects the representativeness of Fiat and Lucchini on the issue of the intensity of conflict. The comparison with Daewoo and Danone (as well as with Usinor in Piombino) reveals that a distinctly Italian anti-union management style persists, although much less than it is usually believed in Poland. This finding might be biased by the industrial sector and the plants' history (with a militant unionism), as well as by the privatisation timing (Fiat and Lucchini entered the Polish market first and, in a way, 'opened the way' for the later investors). A definitive explanation would however require an equally deep analysis of the employers' side, which remains beyond the scope of this thesis.

4.3 Other processes of dualisation

The divergence in the social consciousness of Italian and Polish union activists is not the only process of divergence occurring in today's world of labour. Dualism is in any case not a new topic for the sociology and the economics of work (e.g. Berger and Piore 1980). For a better understanding of dualisation, I shall mention four other processes of dualisation different from the East-West one, but equally visible in the companies which have been the subject of this study: the North vs. South Italian dualism (and in a weaker way, the West vs. East Polish one); the North vs. South

global dualism; the core- vs. subcontractor-companies dualism; the dualisms in the workplace.

The widening of the North-South dualism in Italy is manifest in the Fiat case. Fiat workers in Turin are to a large extent immigrants from the South. In the '70s, among their first claims was investment in the South, even at the cost of some wage restraint: the construction of the Cassino and Termoli plants in that period is seen by the activists as their success.

The construction of the Termoli plant was a success for the union, thanks to the movement which argued that things would not go well if too many workers were concentrated in the same place [in Mirafiori]. [mf6]

Twenty years later, the construction of the green-field plant in Melfi (in the Southern region of Basilicata) arrives not as a success, but as a threat to the Turin unions. In the SATA⁴⁹ factory in Melfi wages are lower and working conditions considerably worse than in Turin (Cersosimo 1994; Della Rocca 1994; Rieser 1996 and 1997). Fiat has started to take advantage of the bargaining weakness of the workers of other plants. In 1994, for the first time in an open way, Fiat set plants against each other in order to impose night-work in Termoli (Cerruti and Rieser 1994). As a result, apprehension in the Northern unions is high.

We swallowed the Melfi model, and we didn't like it for two reasons. First there cannot be first and second class workers, so that they are more exploited than we are (...). Second, also because it was blackmail of us in the North. [mf8]

Moreover, opinions similar to those expressed about the Poles appear about Southern workers and unions.

We know that production in the South has taken jobs away, and conspicuously. The factories are more rationalised and work non-stop, even though the exploitation of workers is obvious. The unions, as I've heard, in the plants in the South and in Cassino have little influence, they bargain less, they work overtime also there... they've accepted, let's say, not that they've sold themselves, but almost, let's say, in some way. [ri6]

The distance between developed and developing countries, although much more complex and deep, displays some analogy with that between Northern and Southern Italy. The issue of social clauses in international trade agreements is the most significant aspect of the tendency of Third World unions to detach themselves from the Northern working class: they easily embrace their governments' position that social clauses represent discrimination against the South by the North. Moreover,

those vanguards of the Southern proletariat – the immigrants – usually do not experience particular solidarity from the Northern unions (Bataille 1997).

Fiat also has plants in Turkey, Argentina, Brazil, joint-ventures in Egypt and India, and programs in Mexico, China and Russia. Unlike in the Polish case, the unions from the Italian plants maintain some contact with the Turkish, Argentinean, and Brazilian unions. This circumstance suggests that the East-West cleavage, for its ideological roots and geographic proximity (which is a source of friction), maintains a stronger meaning than the North-South one. Research evidence from these plants is too fragmentary to risk a general evaluation.⁵⁰ Something more is known about the Fiat plant in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, thanks to an inquiry based mainly on a set of 25 interviews (Pimenta 1996). This is not an old-fashioned factory: on the contrary, it is commonly mentioned as the best example of the new organisational model '*Fabbrica Integrata*'. The quality reorientation of work organisation in the '90s was, however, preceded by a massive firing of unionised workers. The management attitude towards the unions directly recalls the Polish situation. In an interview a manager explains: 'A la Fiat, le syndicat n'a pas d'espace. Ici c'est un lieu de travail et non de politique syndicale' (Pimenta 1996: 411). It is worth reporting the conclusions of that inquiry as regards the trade unions.

La Fiat développe un projet d'incorporation individuel à travers le système de gestion lequel ne laisse de place, on l'a déjà vu, à aucune forme de représentation des travailleurs. Il y a, ainsi, un processus d'annulation du syndicat. (...)

Dans ces conditions, le syndicat est éloigné du débat social et écarté de l'essence même de la vie collective. Il est isolé et à travers ce fait, on nie l'aspect central du processus démocratique: la figuration du conflit. Cet antagonisme entre conservatisme rétrograde – représenté par la position de l'entreprise qui se présente comme unique et totalisante – et un syndicalisme qui n'arrive pas à s'imposer comme représentant légitime et reconnu, a des effets pervers par rapport à ce qui devrait être une acceptation raisonnable du mouvement de l'histoire. Du dedans de cette bataille, et grâce au cadre symbolique institué, la perspective d'une expression politique via l'élaboration et la pratique du conflit est méprisée, tenue pour 'politique syndicale', d'effets personnalisants et néfastes et complètement éloignée d'un quelconque processus démocratique. L'entrée en scène du syndicat représente pour l'entreprise une possibilité de rupture, la menace d'une autre cristallisation différente de celle qu'elle impose, elle entraîne une possible réorganisation de tout son champ politique, à commencer par une redéfinition de la nature de ses rapports avec les travailleurs. (...)

D'où la nécessité urgente de son anéantissement et de son expulsion d'un espace considéré comme particulier et privé. (410-413)

Pimenta depicts in this way an extreme case of the neo-proletarianisation detected in Poland and in Southern Italy. Although contacts between Brazilian and

Italian unions have existed since 1990, they are still far from amounting to effective cooperation. This is not, however, only a fault of the unions, since the employer has also intervened to prevent the construction of a 'global experience'. In April 1992, for instance, Fiat executives at the Belem plant prevented visiting Italian union officers from entering the factory to meet local supervisors.

The third form of dualism takes place within single countries, and often within single plants. This is the phenomenon of 'sub-contracting', which often creates a gap between the status of the core-company employees and their 'sub-contracted' colleagues, especially as regards flexibility. This problem, although 'local', may take on a particular relevance at the international level. With regard to the European Work Councils, the risk of segmentation between large companies with EWCs and smaller domestic producers based on national industrial relations traditions has been denounced (Schulten 96). The unions are indeed more and more aware of the problem, and of the futility of defending only the workers of the 'primary sector'. In Italy, some unionists went as far as to propose the introduction in the bargaining system of a 'contract of product', which would regulate the employment relations in all workplaces contributing to the production of a given good (e.g. a car), irrespective of their societal assets and geographical positions.

The theme of sub-contracting is very sensitive in all off the plants visited. In Mirafiori, about one thousand internal transport workers were outsourced to the Dutch multinational TNT in 1998. Although the unions have obtained a guarantee that for a period of four years employment conditions will not worsen, the 'negative' selection of 'alienated' employees (almost 20% of them are disabled) gives rise to some anxiety.

The place where sub-contracting is more problematic is however Piombino. The most striking aspect is safety at work. In the first five months of 1998 three workers died in three accidents in the Piombino steelworks owned by Lucchini: all of them worked for contractor firms. Given the relevance of the problem, three unionists from the biggest contractor firm (Siderco⁵¹) working in the Lusid plant have been interviewed. Among other things, it emerges very high labour turn-over and frequent transfers of property. For these two reasons employees do not receive seniority

benefits: after twelve years work they may still be on the lowest point of the metalworkers' wage scale. Flexibility of working time is also very high, and industrial relations are reduced to the minimum. What is however more important for my analysis of trade unionism is the widening distance between these employees and the Lusid ones.

Then, the [contractor] companies are the weakest links. Also the unions take more care of the big firms than the small ones, and they disdain them, they find other interests (...). The situations are similar, maybe some are a bit better or worse but there is an uncontrolled situation, companies that come and go, workers who enter and leave. If I must be objective, the union doesn't have a real insight into the situation, only a partial one.

The relationship with the steelworks [Lusid] union is difficult, we meet at the meetings of the local trade union executive, or personally if somebody knows each other. For me it's different because I grew old inside, and there is also personal friendship, but the new delegates who don't know anybody, how can they have a relationship with the steelworks' delegates, there isn't any co-ordination. It would be very useful. There is no willingness to make it because there is the negative tendency to close themselves into their own shell, they also have other problems. I can understand it, the Lusid delegate has his own problems and tries to solve them. If he doesn't take care of us but does solve his own problems, he cuts a fine figure, never mind, the others will think about the rest. [sf1]

The worse working conditions and industrial relations of these companies recall the dualisation idea. There are indeed analogies between the Siderco company and the Polish ones, like for instance the move of conflict from collective bargaining and workplace relations to the tribunal, as the last resource for defending workers' rights.

In Poland, the unions have up to now managed to control the subcontracting process (called by the Italian management *terziarizzazione*) and maintain an influence on the outsourced companies. This does not go without a certain apprehension.

Now they say that *tercjaryzacja* [Polish neologism invented by the Italian management to translate *terziarizzazione*] starts. Such a word doesn't exist in any dictionary of the Polish language. Basically it consists in splitting firms into smaller ones. This is a problem for the unions. We believe that they do it in order to avoid paying taxes. [tp1]

In the newly established companies the unions have a hard time. By contrast, in both Italy and Poland, the unions may resist the process of subcontracting at the moment of outsourcing. When a part of the workforce is alienated, the alarm among the employees is such that unionisation jumps instead of dropping. In Tychy, the unions are very engaged on this front.

They know that moving they wouldn't resist so long. They don't change working conditions, they have guaranteed for one year the same conditions as they now have, but after one year something might change. For this reason they are afraid for their future and they set up a union,

at the moment of outsourcing when the new firm is established, the same day the trade union *Sierpień 80* is constituted, there is a group of specialised people. So people trust the union, they don't found other unions. [tal]

This tale illustrates the singular ease with which Tychy unions face subcontracting. However, this is not that exceptional: Polish unions altogether seem effective in this regard. At Huta Lucchini Solidarity has withstood the same process by organising itself into an 'inter-company' trade union, representing both 'mother' and 'affiliated' employees. The same solution was found at Ursus. In the steel sector, the unions made guarantees for the 'outsourced' employees a central topic in the negotiation of the steel-sector restructuring plan. Strong union control of outsourcing is in place at Petrochemia Płock and at the smaller Rafineria Gdańska. The unions of Daewoo encountered some problems with outsourcing, but in this case the unions also remained united and the workforce of the 'mother' plant backed the workers of the 'peripheral' ones. In the energy sector the situation is more differentiated, with the positive case of the Wrocław power station and the negative one of Cracow (Soufflet 1998).

In general, in Poland the 'subcontracted' unionists do not display a proletarian rhetoric and pessimism like their counterparts at Siderco (in Piombino) or TNT (in Turin). Their relationships with the 'mother-company' unions are more balanced than in Italy. This situation suggests a hypothesis related to the previous discussion of the impact of alternation. Perhaps precisely because they are not rooted in a given type of employment relations, Polish unions sometimes turn out to be better equipped than the Italian ones when facing changes in employment conditions.

The last form of dualisation is internal to the companies and the plants. It occurs between genders, between professional levels, and between age groups. Sometimes innovations in work organisation increase this differentiation, as has been noted about the 'dualising' effects of the *Fabbrica Integrata* at Fiat (Rieser 1996). Even an author rather positively disposed towards Fiat's 'Japanese' reorientation remarks that at Mirafiori unskilled workers, in the 1993-95 period, received on average only 2,5 hours of training, whereas their supervisors received 100 (Bonazzi 1998). These dualisms interior to the working class raise broader theoretical issues however which will be treated in the next chapter.

To conclude, the various forms of dualisation among countries and companies suggest that the disarticulation of working-class consciousness (the separation of 'pride' and 'proletarian' consciousness) described by Touraine (1984) could assume a spatial dimension. On the one hand, the preservation in the most developed countries and regions, and in the core-companies, of sophisticated production and stable employment relations might lead workers to a corporatist defence of occupational interests, sometimes masked by ideology. On the other, the transfer of labour-intensive production and the search for lower costs, especially if under foreign control, could favour neo-proletarian consciousness. In this case, trade unionism would have great difficulty in unifying workers. The new conditions require a re-examination of the bases for collective action.

¹ For the same reason the Italian Fismic and Ugl were preliminarily excluded.

² There is indeed also a material factor behind this: the working week for metalworkers is 38.5 hours in Italy and 42 hours in Poland.

³ And to contrast this situation with the Italian one, he gave the example of a strike in the '70s at the Termoli plant, which was called because in the canteen the plum stones were too big.

⁴ Of course wages are not irrelevant for Italian workers. A survey of Turin workers (not just union activists) indicates that 58.3% of manual workers consider wages an important problem. However, most of them are also concerned by other issues, and only 12.7% may be defined as coherently 'wage-oriented' (Cerruti and Rieser 1999).

⁵ As a cultural explanation the religious variable might be used. Italian restraint on economic issues might be due to the deeply Catholic and anti-Calvinist (in the Weberian sense) Italian culture. Of course, the Polish culture is equally, or more, Catholic, but it was for a long time influenced by Protestantism: between 1569 and the First Partition in 1772 Roman Catholics accounted for barely half of the total population, and the principle of toleration governed inter-religious relations, attracting the persecuted from any religion from any part of Europe. In the second half of the XVI century the Calvinists even constituted one of the most powerful groupings in political life, commanding the allegiance of an estimated 20% of the nobility together with an absolute majority among the lay members of the Senate (Davies 1981: 159ff). By contrast, Italy has never been religiously pluralist. Moreover, during the partitions in the XIX century and Bismark's *Kulturkampf*, which eventually strengthened the identification Pole=Catholic, the Catholic identity took quite a different form than that in Southern European countries. As Therborn (1995: 106) argues, sociologically the Catholic-Protestant divide is probably not theological but a matter of ecclesiastical authority. In this sense, Polish ecclesiastical authority under the Partitions and communism developed in a very particular form. Today, although Poles rank very high in Church attendance (88.2% at least once a month compared to 51.1% in Italy, according to the ISSP 1992), they are 'less' Catholic in their political, economic, and moral judgements: the Church did not procure authority on these issues.

⁶ I refer here to the '*vulgata*' of Maslow's thought, very popular in psychology, sociology, and marketing. Maslow himself was actually aware, at least in the later writings, that a need had not to be totally fulfilled before the 'next' need became activated: the emergence of a need was then defined as gradual and not as a sudden phenomenon. Similarly, he was aware that 'pay' was not important only at the level of physical needs, but also at other, higher levels.

⁷ Berger and Piore, in their fundamental study of economic dualism, correctly remark:

Since the quality of human experience varies greatly across the segments into which the society and economy divide, and since it varies critically in ways which are not captured by a single variable like income, life experiences seem virtually incommensurate. Is the self-employed

street vendor of Bogotá better or worse off than the industrial worker of the Ford assembly line in Detroit? It is difficult enough to compare the two, let alone decide who is better off. (Berger and Piore 1980: 11)

⁸ This is the finding of the most accurate analyses of real income indicators (Milic-Czerniak 1998). The rise in income, however, is shown not only by very dubious statistical data. Precise statistical evaluations of real income are almost impossible in transitional economies because of the drastic change in the basket and of an alteration in the relative value of time and money. A participant observation of Polish standards of living during the last eight years has been more revealing.

⁹ In 1991 important laws on trade unions and on collective disputes were passed; in 1993 the 'pact for the enterprise' was signed and the tripartite commission was created; in 1994 the law on collective bargaining was passed, and in 1996 the new Code of Labour. The social 'partners', and especially the employers, have since repeatedly called for a revision of these regulations, which suggests that the institutionalisation is still incomplete and perhaps unachievable.

¹⁰ If one excludes time, the relationship between institutionalisation and trust becomes surely of the U-curve kind: institutions are impossible when trust is very low, and redundant when trust is very high (see Crouch (1993) on the similar point of the relationship separateness/contract).

¹¹ In Italy strikes in the private sector are not regulated, apart from the article of the Constitution stating the 'right to strike'. In Poland, by contrast, a law of 1991 provides detailed regulation. Only, when compared to reality this appears to be an 'over-regulation', and it generally remains a dead letter. Which suggests that today's problem is not a lack of institutional regulation.

¹² The three interviews from the Siderco company have not been considered, as they do not have a direct Polish counterpart.

¹³ The measures ranged from telling jokes about the Italians, which Poles do appreciate very much, to underlining cooperation with French and European institutions and the absence of any link with Italian organisations, and to evincing familiarity with Polish life. I also recall that the interviews were carried out in Polish. Similarly, in Italy national identification was limited by remarking on French and European links and the long periods of work and study spent abroad, including Poland: some unionists after some time even started calling me 'the Pole'.

¹⁴ I shall not analyse the opinions of the higher hierarchical levels because I hold only a very limited knowledge on them, and, above all, the topic of this research is a sociology of the trade unions and of the working class. However, indirect information (through for instance former interpreters) and occasional conversations suggest that Italian executives successfully developed a representation of the Poles as basically 'different' which psychologically justifies a treatment distinct from that reserved for Italian employees.

¹⁵ There is some truth in this statement. The trade unions from Lusid (ex-Ilva) and from the Magona D'Italia (which was also owned by Lucchini, but which has always been private) have different orientations (Magona is traditionally more radical) and are sometimes antagonistic. However, solidarity usually prevails among the two plants.

¹⁶ This tale, after having visited the union offices in the Piombino plant, sounds to me strange but not unrealistic: Fiom delegates never wear ties, but the Fim ones do. A paradox lies in the fact that it is at Huta Warszawa that full-time union officers always wear ties. This tale is in any case meaningful as to the Polish representation of the Italian unions.

¹⁷ This particular is absolutely unrealistic for obvious biographic reasons, the whole tale is not.

¹⁸ Indeed, nationalist arguments are more easily exploited against nationalities with which the Poles were used to having difficult relations. Interesting are the workers' tales, for instance, from a German company which has recently been an object of research.

'Once the team went out for a cigarette, and the German foreman started screaming at them around the canteen: "smoking is forbidden, smoking is forbidden!". Then a guy said to him "what's this, Auschwitz?". The German immediately shut up'. (...) 'People here are scared, you know how Germans treated the Poles (...) We say Auschwitz because the foreman walks around the workshop and continuously repeats "*nicht spazieren, nicht diskutieren, arbeit, arbeit!*", like in a camp'. (Marcinowski 1998: 98)

¹⁹ During the strike at Huta Lucchini in 1994 the media rapidly shifted from sympathy to hostility when the unions suggested continuing production under workers' control. In the Fiat case as

well, the media are usually hostile to workers' arguments but sensitive to nationalist ones. The use of nationalist arguments against Fiat is surprising in the liberal, Western-oriented press, like for instance in the article '*Polska Fiata*' ('Fiat's Poland') in the right-wing, liberal magazine *Wprost* (n.2, 1995). David Ost tell me he has read in the Cracow press, about Fiat, nothing less than the word 'imperialism', otherwise banned from the Polish vocabulary.

²⁰ In particular, the *Lega Nord* in Northern Italy (1996 parliamentary elections), the FPÖ in Austria (1995 parliamentary elections), and the *Front National* in France (1995 presidential elections) have become the first party among industrial workers.

²¹ Solidarity 80 and *Sierpień 80* display anti-European orientations at the central level, but in the plants this was almost imperceptible.

²² Piombino unions not only do not participate in transnational action, but experience serious problems even in coordinating with the unions from the other Lucchini plants in Italy. Eloquent was the apprehension expressed by Piombino unions in 1994 when Lucchini announced investments in the plant of Servola (near Trieste).

²³ This tradition is not without effects in the present, as is revealed for instance by the relatively positive attitude (at least at the general, political level) of the Italian unions towards immigrants.

²⁴ However, the ETUC did not oppose European Union enlargement eastward, unlike the French FO and CGT who in the '80s opposed the enlargement to Spain and Greece. Also the US unions opposed the NAFTA agreement, but this is a different case from the EU, as it did not include any political or social integration; by contrast, after the NAFTA implementation forms of ad hoc cooperation between US and Mexican unions developed, especially in the border region thanks to that *Kreuzung sozialer Kreise* which I shall indicate as a determinant factor. In the same way, interesting cases of international union cooperation have developed in the border regions between Germany and Poland or the Czech Republic (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung 1999).

²⁵ The significance level would be much higher, but misleading, if the 'no information' interviews were included in the Chi squared test.

²⁶ For an example of radical criticism of this conception of modernity see: Le Goff (1999). On the multiple sociological theories of modernity see: Wagner (1994) and Martuccelli (1999).

²⁷ If we were speaking of modernity at the level of theory, and not of common discourse, we should also mention, as a fundamental aspect, instrumental rationality. Today, however, in the debate on work instrumental rationality is no longer the central meaning of modernity. The apex of rationality in organisational thought was the 'scientific' organisation of work (SOW). All subsequent streams of thought (post-Taylorist, post-Fordist etc.) have reduced the independent and 'leading' role of absolute rationality. However, they are by no means post-, pre- or anti-modern: they present themselves as more advanced and progressive than the SOW. An eloquent example is given by Womack *et al*'s (1990) celebration of the 'Japanese' organisation: they present a very evolutionist and modernist reasoning, arguing that lean production resolves the problems of SOW in a perspective of continuous progress and change.

²⁸ Castel (1995) sees the 'new social question' in opposite terms, that is as a move from contract to status. However, he too strongly associates the general concept of 'contract' with the historically given type of 'permanent employment contract'. Current trends, while dismantling that historical type, actually show the triumph the idea of contract as voluntary, individual, self-regulating trading.

²⁹ To give an example of the sophistication of the issue, also for the purpose of defining Polish modernisation stage, we can refer to the recent work by Wagner (1994). Wagner distinguishes, historically, three forms of modernity: 'restricted liberal modernity' in XIX-century Europe, 'organised modernity' in the XX century, and an emerging, recent 'enlarged liberal modernity', implying an individual self-determination for everybody independently from the welfare state. According to this typology, it is difficult (and at the same time a fascinating issue for further research) to discern whether today's Poland belongs to the first or the third form.

³⁰ Defenders of the shock therapy tend by contrast to defend themselves using a circular argument: if the outcome is deceiving it is because the therapy was not sufficiently 'shocking'. Only a comparison East-West can unmask this argument.

³¹ The peak in Fiat's recruiting of Southern-Italian immigrants occurred in 1961-63 with 22,000 arrivals. The massive migration to Turin from the South was the subject of a classic piece of research (Fofi 1964/1975). Also Piombino, not because of immigration but because of its geographic position, has close relations with rural society. The rural element therefore cannot be a distinguishing factor between Italy and Poland.

³² The interviewee is clearly referring to respectively: the PLI (Italian Liberal Party) and the PRI (Italian Republican Party); the DC (Christian Democracy); the PCI (Italian Communist Party). None of these parties exists anymore, but for the interviewee nothing has changed. The blood-suckers are state-sector workers and criminal organisations.

³³ At the official level there are no differences between the Warsaw and Piombino unions on the environmental issue, as both have resolutely demanded non-polluting production. In Warsaw the problem had in the past opposed the plant to the district, which in November 1991 even demanded the closing of the steelworks. However, it was basically resolved, especially by closing the Martens furnaces, with the decisive contribution of the trade unions (which at that time had a decisive role in the joint-venture company). In Piombino the problem is more complicated because of the blast-furnaces and the cokery, and it is still not definitely solved although an important agreement on restructuring and reclamation was signed by company and local authorities in 1998.

³⁴ For instance, at Lucchini the wage differentials (the ratio between the lowest and the highest wages for productive workers) are 100/210 in Piombino and 100/400 in Warsaw (for the same professional levels).

³⁵ The Polish miners indeed occasionally organise protest demonstrations, especially when the government's promises are not maintained. These protests are, however, usually rational and much more pacific than those which accompanied similar changes in Western Europe in the '80s (especially in England, the model country of Polish liberal reformers).

³⁶ Following the 1990 Law on Privatisation of State-Owned Enterprises, a large number of enterprises has been transformed into joint-stock, 100% Treasury-owned companies, as a first step (commercialisation) towards privatisation.

³⁷ This point shows how the past may be rewritten in order to adapt it to the alternation image: even accepting the definition of slavery for the partition period and for the communist regime, in between (1918-1939) Poland was thoroughly independent.

³⁸ Another explanation of the Polish 'market utopia' and repudiation of alternatives has been suggested by Maurice Glasman (1994) drawing on Karl Polanyi's *The Great Transformation* (1944). According to Glasman, in Poland after 1989 a kind of 'market utopia' sprang up as a reaction to decades of oppressive state paternalism, just like it emerged in England in the early XIX Century as a reaction to the social paternalism of the Speenhamland scale welfare policy. However, Polanyi's scheme fails when it predicts a collective social reaction against the market (which has not taken place in Eastern Europe). Moreover, as it was remarked by Kowalik (1994), Glasman's point is too evolutionary and constructivist, and misses the complexity of the process when he contrasts the 'stagnant paternalism' of pre-1989 Poland with the 'libertarian atomisation' of post-1989 even more simplistically than the 'transition' theorists do.

³⁹ The interviewee uses the word *powszechniak*, a pejorative for 'general school system', distancing himself from a traditional worker movement's claim and a core principle of socialism (and of social democracy too indeed, until Blair and D'Alema).

⁴⁰ Ost and Weinstein (1999) argue that a role has been played by the experience of many Poles working as *Gastarbeiter* in the West. Through this specific experience, they would have learnt that working outside union protection (and even against unions' advice) is profitable. In my interviews, however, I have found no evidence of this factor, although a few interviewees told of having worked abroad.

⁴¹ PCI general secretary (1972-1984), author of the so-called breach (*strappo*) from the Soviet Union in 1981 (after Jaruzelski's 'auto-golpe').

⁴² This does not mean that multinational capital is distinctly 'nasty' with the trade unions. Extensive research suggests that local private capital may be even more hostile to the trade unions (Gardawski, Gąciarz, Mokrzyzewski and Pańków 1999), and similar indications come from other postcommunist countries.

⁴³ In 1991 the unemployment rate was 5.5 in the West and 10.4 in the East, in 1998 respectively 9.4 and 18.7 (Source: Deutsche Bundesbank).

⁴⁴ In Piombino the suspicion of a typically Italian adversarial management is strongly supported by the events at *Magona* in 1998-99. This steelworks, which under Lucchini saw a permanent conflict between unions and management, was sold to the French Usinor in 1998. Immediately the situation improved and according to the unions bargaining and information are now excellent.

⁴⁵ Another French-based multinational company, Thomson, has been viewed in Poland as a particularly positive case (Durand and Le Goff 1996; Durand 1997). Moreover, at Thomson in Italy there have been protests against production transfers to Poland. Durand and Le Goff's account itself, though generally benevolent toward the management, raises however some interesting doubts: workers complain about norms and stress; the management system has remained basically authoritarian (unlike the Western plants); salary and professional differentials have considerably increased.

⁴⁶ The *Komitet Obrony Robotników* (Workers' Defence Committee), founded by a number of intellectuals and dissidents like Jacek Kuroń and Jan Józef Lipski, initiated the workers-intellectuals dialogue which proved so important for Solidarity four years later. In Italy, the 1976 events in Ursus and Radom pushed Enrico Berlinguer, PCI general secretary, to explicitly condemn, for the first time, the Polish communist authorities. On the 1976-1980 period at Ursus see Żbikowska and van Kooten (1990).

⁴⁷ In Warsaw there are about 240 workers; the Independent Union of the Milk Industry has about 80 members, Solidarity (which formerly had 120 members) only 40, ¾ of whom are male technicians.

⁴⁸ In order to understand Solidarity's feelings of 'siege' it has also to be remembered that the plant Solidarity press-officer (known for his particularly anti-Semitic declarations) was killed under unclear circumstances in 1996. Since then the Solidarity activists have made use of the most conservative traditional Polish martyrology.

⁴⁹ Just as the foreign transplants of Fiat do not directly belong to Fiat Auto (but for instance in Poland to Fiat Auto Poland), also the Melfi plant has different corporate structure and belongs to a distinct company, SATA. This solution facilitates the differentiation of human resources management. The most extreme case is the Turkish one, where the factories belong to Fiat, but the personnel to a Turkish company. In this way, in 1998 it was very easy for Fiat to refuse any responsibility when the Italian unions protested at the massive firing of unionised workers in the Turkish factory.

⁵⁰ There are indeed some journalists' *reportages*, which delineate a very dark picture, like Loris Campetti's ones in *Il Manifesto*.

⁵¹ Siderco (about 130 employees) deals with internal transport and maintenance work in the Lusid steelworks. Unionisation rate is around 80%.

CHAPTER 5

THE CHALLENGE OF DIFFERENCE

*Za wolność waszą i naszą.**
(Polish slogan, 1831)

1. The transformation of trade union commitment

1.1. *Work experience and life experience*

1.1.1. The end of activism?

This chapter will discuss the last of the three working hypothesis, on how the activists see the differentiation which is occurring at work (and described in the previous two chapters). The first section will strive to define the problem, while the second one will attempt, on the basis of the research materials, to find an answer.

This issue directly affects the problems of solidarity and the motives for political participation. It is therefore necessary to describe initially the situation of union commitment. In fact, the investigation in the plants has revealed that trade union activism still exists, but major changes have occurred.

During the inquiry, only rank-and-file workers were interviewed, full-time unionists being excluded. The majority of the sample (58 out of 91) did carry on trade union functions (mainly as shop-floor delegates), but this never implied more than a few hours a week of paid union work. Although non-unionised workers and the most radical unions often make insinuations about the abusing of this 'union' time, this was not the reality subjectively recounted by the interviewees. Rather, they evinced the personal costs (in terms of time and of loss of career chances) involved in union activity. Since the interviews were always carried out for free and during workers' free time, it may be assumed that at least some voluntary commitment endures.

* For your freedom and ours.

To some extent, trade union activism has always also been a channel for social promotion which was an alternative to a work career. Within the automobile factories this was already showed in the late '40s by Chinoy's in-depth study in the United States (Chinoy 1955). However, today workers report, in Italy as well as in Poland, that the office of delegate has lost much of its attractiveness, to the point that sometimes the unions have trouble finding enough candidates. Although professionalism has increased in the unions of both East and West, the figure of the activist – and of its most institutionalised form of the delegate or shop steward – emerges as complex and involved in a mix of social relations with the workforce that cannot be reduced to the representative-represented pattern. The reality of trade union activity I encountered in the plants strongly differs from the bureaucratic one of trade union local offices which in Italy has been splendidly described by Manghi (1996). The continuous movement of people, the continuous discussion about everyday work problems, the self-distancing from the trade union central organisation, the maintenance of 'identity incentives' indicate a still lively reality. Most workers still identify the trade union as being the shop-stewards and activists.¹ The simple fact that unions' membership is highly variable among workshops indicates the importance of the rank and file activists' local role. In Poland, the activists report that people re-joined Solidarity in 1989 only in those workshops where union activity was visible, regardless of national-level political questions.

The constant tension, in both countries, between workplace representatives and central trade unions confirms the existence of an autonomous role at the rank-and-file level. In this regard, the trade union cannot be reduced to 'an organisation of trade unionists' (Ciafaloni 1994). In some cases the opposite might even be said: union activism may become similar to other forms of voluntary work, and unionists may play the role of '*entrepreneurs altruistes*' (Bode 1997). The Italian trade unions' claims to have at their disposal 300,000 voluntary unionists besides the 20,000 full-time officers (De Sanctis 1996) are probably exaggerated. Nonetheless, there is even less evidence for the opposite statement, i.e. that voluntary activists have disappeared. In both Italy and Poland trade union commitment resists much better than political party commitment, which instead has certainly dropped dramatically. All interviewees

agree on this point, and one from Turin comments: 'the party can survive without us, in the factory on the contrary without us the union would disappear' [mc6].

If trade union activists cannot be associated with the 'professionals' of the unions, neither can they any longer be assimilated with the workforce. The 91 interviewees who are the subject of this study are not representative of the employees of the six plants not only because they do not constitute a representative sample in statistical terms. Much more, this is due to the patent discontinuity between workers and unions, which was at best evinced by the frequent feeling of isolation and loneliness among the activists described in chapter 3. This breach between the workers and the trade unions is among the components of working class decomposition, but only when it is connected to the other 'constants of disintegration'. That is, only when it is linked to a wider social and historical process (bureaucratisation, gap between generations, nostalgia...). As such, the feelings of isolation and disappointment with the behaviour of the rank and file are not a novelty. They are sociologically immanent in any social organisation which is not perfectly egalitarian. In Italy, these feelings among unionists were already described in the early '80s by Ida Regalia (1984), and in Poland they can be easily detected in the materials of Touraine's 1981 inquiry on Solidarity.

Nonetheless, some changes are taking place. The profile of the activist is less clear than in the past, and not only the *iconography* of the past. In Poland change is made macroscopic by the political turning point of 1989: the decision to become a union activist no longer has the meaning of a life-choice, as it did during the period of clandestine activity.

I joined the union when it officially didn't exist, when it was illegal. We paid the fees and it worked, and at that time among people it was interesting. Because simply joining the union took place under specific conditions. First, three weeks of environmental interview, during which the candidate introduced himself, what he thought, that he did not create threats for the organisation. [bs2]

More generally, and not only in Poland, the traditional figure of the 'militant' appears old-fashioned, apart from the case of the particularly nostalgic Mirafiori Fiom. Most interviewees themselves avoid idyllic or epic representations of their own commitment, aware that those images are today backfiring in the relations with the employer as well as with employees.

On this specific point, the recent sociological criticism of the concept of the 'militant' (which in English has never been popular, as it was in Italian and French) is well-founded.

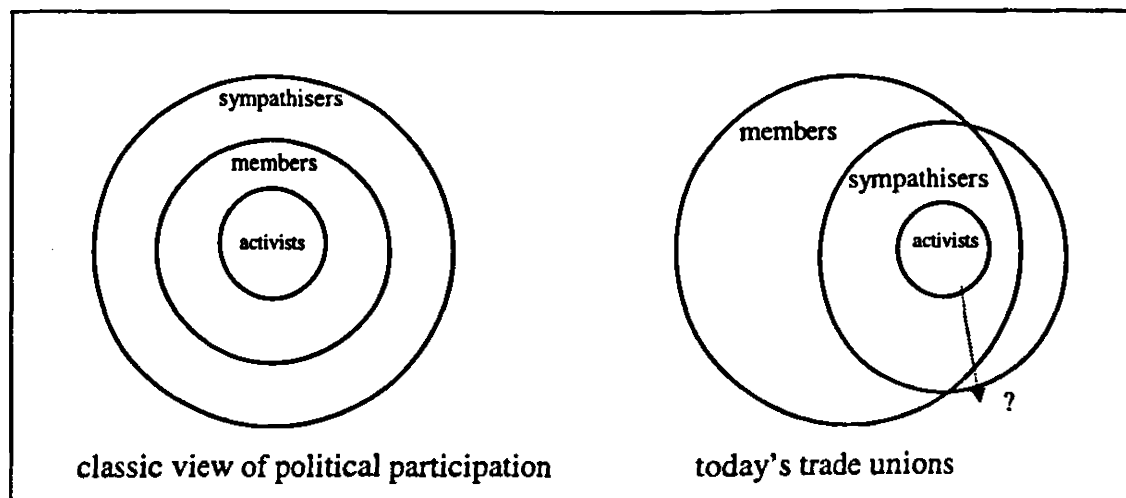
L'image du militant, comme celle du croisé, nous inspire plus de méfiance que d'admiration.
(Touraine 1997: 73)

On constate de plus la disparition des figures traditionnelles du leader charismatique ou du militant de base, capable de prendre en charge des demandes parfois très limitées tout en les inscrivant dans un combat très général. (Wieviorka 1998: 15)

The field evidence allows us to say more than this. The classic theories of political participation should be revisited in the case of today's unionism. They usually distinguish three concentric circles of participants: sympathisers, members, and militants.² In the case of unionism this has never corresponded to reality in countries having some kind of 'closed shop' clause or, for any other reason, an institutionally-founded very high unionisation rate. Nevertheless, for decades it has represented a suitable description of the unions in Latin countries. Typically, the unions at Fiat Mirafiori have always preferred securing larger support for mobilisation purposes to increasing unionisation, which has always remained much below the national average.

Nowadays, not only, as we shall see in more detail, has the central circle of 'militants' changed its nature, often reducing in its size, but the two other circles have inverted their size and are no longer concentric (Figure 1).

Figure 1



Today, as is acknowledged by the unionists themselves, it is entirely possible to join a union without really supporting its action. This is confirmed by the fact that in opinion polls the orientations of union members do not significantly differ from those of the larger workers' population (e.g. Marini 1997). In the plants included in this study, the clearest example is given by the referenda organised at Lusid in Piombino on which many union members voted against the unions' proposals. This point makes the issue of union democracy more delicate than ever before, as one can see from the current debate (see for instance Fraser 1998). In this regard, as in many others mentioned in the previous chapter, Poland is not behind but is rather a vanguard. For instance, in 1998 right-wing members of the ruling coalition proposed that workers should be given the right to expel the unions from their workplaces by majority ballot.³ This initiative is interesting not for its content, impudently anti-worker and anti-union, but because it is evidence of the critical relationship between democracy and unionism. In this regard, the unionisation rate has clearly become unreliable as an indicator of trade union strength. Necessary instead is a careful analysis of the changing *meanings* of trade union commitment, which will be attempted in this chapter.

A supplementary point is the position of the 'activists'. One might also suggest, with regard to Figure 1, that the inner circle of activists is moving across the borders of the members and the sympathisers (as shown by the arrow). In fact, one interviewee (ta6) had *not* joined the union, and a few others did it only after a first period of 'independent' activism. Among the new, radical unions (Cobas, *Sierpień 80* and others) membership clearly does not correspond to union strength: many workers support the unions though they do not join them, or even though they are members of other unions. In the other unions, the activists are often in sharp divergence with the organisation. All these phenomena argue for a process of union *deinstitutionalisation*, in spite of all the simultaneous phenomena of bureaucratisation.⁴

In many unions, especially in the most radical like Cobas but not only there, a criticism of the idea of delegation is expressed in even more precise terms. This criticism at the same time emerges from a wider crisis of representative democracy

and of its institutions, and on an emerging search for *subjectivity*, as I shall show below.

Among the plants there are important differences in the form of union commitment. First, an *institutional* factor distinguishes the Polish from the Italian delegates. Whereas the Italian RSU are elected by the whole workforce (unionised and non-unionised), the Polish delegates are elected only by the union members. In this regard, Italian unions might be considered as more 'democratic', although the fact that 33% of the RSU are reserved to the unions that signed collective agreements might challenge such a judgement.

Moreover, there are differences in the 'intensity' of union activism. The best ground on which to evaluate these differences is not the subjective discourses given in the interviews, but the experience of access to the fieldwork. While some unions (especially Cobas, Piombino Fiom, and *Sierpień 80*) were very co-operative and easily found a number of people to speak with, the case was different particularly with the unions from Rivalta (with the possible exception of Fim) and Warsaw, where the 'activists' were somehow more 'hidden'. Warsaw Solidarity is in this regard an extreme example. Although no other company was devoted so much time as the *Huta Lucchini-Warszawa*, it proved very difficult to find a quantitatively and qualitatively sufficient sample to interview. This difficulty was partly due to the scarcity of free time among Warsaw workers, because of the almost universal possession of second jobs and the times of transport in the Polish capital. But this was only one side of the coin. The plant union leadership, albeit personally very cooperative, heavily interfered in the access to the lower level of the unions. The interviewees were mostly selected according to their closeness to the leadership's views, and the approach to other people was discouraged. Moreover, the first interviews took place in the presence of an union officer, who often intervened (this also happened with the Popiełuszko union in Tychy). These elements raise the issue of tensions with the rank and file experienced by unions undertaking a participative or a political engagement, like the Rivalta and Warsaw ones. One of the interviewees from the Huta expresses it in the most straightforward way.

By contrast, as regards the top of our union, that is the *prezydium*, I think that there is some misunderstanding, that is myself I don't really know what should I think. But our terribly low

wages result from negotiations between the unions and the employer, and often I question precisely this, why that little. Some people argue that this is definitely not that little, I don't know where this comes from, whether from the understanding of the difficult situation by the unions... Because I wouldn't like to suspect that there is some kind of unwillingness, I think that somehow the employers come nearer to our unions, and this leads to the moderate demands on wages. [hs8]

1.1.2. The end of work?

Besides the thesis of the end of activism, another recent stream of thought draws pessimistic conclusions with regard to the trade unions. The idea that work has lost its power as a social integrator and as a source for identities has been developed either on philosophical grounds (e.g. Méda 1995) or on economic ones (e.g. Rifkin 1995), or even on both at the same time (e.g. Boissonnat 1995). Sociology has had a hard time in finding its place in this debate. The fieldwork carried out in the Italian and Polish workplaces, however, suggests that sociological research, through an open access to workers' points of view, might contribute by assessing and possibly correcting unilateral theoretical statements.

The older activists remember when engagement in the factory was central if compared to the rest of social life. In heavily industrialised areas like Turin and Silesia, union activity was predominant in comparison with political and cultural involvement. In Turin, the party was the 'transmission belt' of the union, and the University turned around the factory, not the opposite. In Silesia, if compared to the other Polish regions, the focus of Solidarity in 1980-81 was on union action rather than on political or national engagement (Touraine, Wieviorka, Dubet and Strzelecki 1982). Nowadays, Tychy union activists remember with some nostalgia the time when Solidarity cared about people at work.

The work experience has changed namely in its 'collective' and socialising nature. At Mirafiori, until the '70s the 'density' of workers was even excessive, to the point of creating security problems. Nowadays, many work posts are so distant among each other, that the communication among workers is impossible. At the Lucchini steelworks in Piombino, the elderly workers remember the times when they had lunch in specific rooms (*refettori*) in each workshop, and how this was important for the socialisation of the teams. Now, they all have lunch in the canteen, which has

certainly been a material improvement but has dissolved the homogeneous worker groups into a two-thousands-employees mass.

Nowadays, the framework of a worker's choice to engage him or herself in the union is more complex, and seems to have lost its 'centre' in the workplace. However, getting rid of the current complexity by simply concluding that work has lost any meaning would be an attestation of intellectual laziness. If the problem were reduced to the alternative 'either the end of work or the endurance of work', the evidence rather supports the latter hypothesis. In this sense, a qualitative micro-sociological study like mine (in any case not representative as it concentrates on the 'hard core' of industrial work) basically confirms the macro-sociological results according to which not that much has changed in the role of work in modern Western societies (Crouch 1999). Therefore, the idea of the 'end of work' is useful if it induces the investigation of the new, complex and multisided interplay between life spheres; it is by contrast sterile if aims at justifying the lack of interest in work. What does matter, therefore, is not the 'end' of work but its changing, differentiated and individualised meanings.

Especially, but not only, in the still working-class based unions of the *Sierpień 80* type, free time is represented as basically 'empty' time: 'after work, the best thing is to go to bed, to rest, the day after to work again' [ta6]. The activists of this union see any sort of problem as the consequence of the work situation: 'and these problems at work flow over into the home setting' [ta2]. What is more, is that also in the other unions, where work has lost much of its meaning for union consciousness, the rejection of work as a value is extremely rare: in only three interviews (out of ninety one) is work represented as marginal or as simply something from which to escape. We are not entering a kind of Greek *polis* where people, finally free from work, are concerned only by culture and leisure. Life-sphere experiences outside the workplace, although often mentioned and sometimes important, rarely affect the social reality of the trade unions: usually, an invisible barrier still isolates the unions from the world outside.

I have some very good friends among the colleagues – we go out, we have fun, but we ignore all the problems (...). I meet the others outside work, but we avoid speaking about work. It is as if one said: OK, we're friends, but don't touch work because we think in different ways. We don't raise the serious problems because they might affect the friendships. [ri4]

Another point on the enduring role of the experience of work emerges with a particular distinctness, although it would require more accurate analysis. The influence of the media, which according to common post-modern and post-industrial views should have replaced class position in opinion 'making', appears to be secondary. Only one case of an activist motivated in the first place by mass-media information has been encountered. Interestingly enough, this is the case of an extreme-left-wing supporter of Mirafiori Cobas.

Then, this choice of Cobas was almost for... I approached these ideas while listening to Bertinotti⁵ on TV, I say, damn, in this world of useless people where Fiom, where the unionist takes a coffee with the personnel director, at least this one is saying, as Nanni Moretti⁶ says, 'something left-wing'. [mc3]

The other interviewees either do not mention the media, or do it only in order to criticise it. Not only explicit, but also implicit or unconscious references seem rare, although this would require a more systematic test. Generally, the workers display a very suspicious, if not hostile, attitude towards the media. They show in this way the remains of a cultural 'otherness' as well as the subjective capacity to take points of view alternative to the dominant ones. Whether this cultural 'otherness' eventually perpetuates a cultural subordination, in the way the 'otherness' of working-class children reinforces their social disadvantage at school (Willis 1977), is an open question for further research.

1.1.3. The indefinite borders of working time

On the issue of the role of work in activists' lives more can be said by analysing their use and representation of time.

Here, a distinction should be made between working hours and working years. As to the working life, in Italy there is indeed a major shift of workers' attention from work to extra-work: the issue of pensions has become in recent years of fundamental importance. Many older unionists regret that while in the past the goal of the workers was to 'change the workplace', today it is to 'escape the workplace as soon as possible'. In this sense they realised Gorz's (1988) ideas of liberation *from* work instead of *at* work. In Poland the issue of pensions has gained the headlines only very recently. It has been of great importance only in the case of the steelworkers and (especially) of the miners, who in December 1998 and in May 1999 mobilised to

defend their right to early retirement. In the interviews carried out in Poland the topic of pensions is almost totally absent. Although pensions reform was being discussed in Poland in recent years, this was never to become an issue for mass protest movements like the one that, on the same question, provoked Berlusconi's downfall in autumn 1994.⁷

The issue of working time on the day- or week-base is different. In both countries the unions, although not very forcefully, have been claiming in the last years a reduction of working time at the national level. The shop-floor experience is however much more complex.

First, in all the plants, whether in Italy or in Poland, overtime work was widespread, at least until the slump in the steel sector and of Fiat Auto Poland in 1998-99. Moreover, it is basically outside the control of the unions,⁸ although in Italy a frequent and incisive form of industrial action is precisely the overtime ban. For this reason, the meaning of a legal reduction of working time is for the rank-and-file activists puzzling. In both Italy and Poland there are legal or contractual limits to overtime work (in both countries 150 hours per year, with exceptions for specific sectors and activities), and a central claim by the employers is to raise them. However, the concrete realities display important differences: in the Italian contractor companies and in the Polish plants overtime work seems to have become completely out of control, with peaks of 50 hours in a month.⁹

An even more important issue is that of second jobs. These are unfortunately, like the whole sphere of informal economy, a much too neglected topic of economic sociology. In Italy a worthy exception to the overall scientific indifference is the work done by Gallino (1982 and 1985). The quota of employees having a second job in Italy in the early '80s was estimated to be *at least* 15%. However, more important than their inevitably speculative estimations are some remarks by Gallino's team on the *meaning* of second jobs. Having a second job is normally resisted by the unions, and subsequently the bi-occupied are commonly seen as a sort of class traitors. Accordingly, the relationship between bi-occupied and unions should be uneasy. In fact, it was discovered that, in the Turin area, the bi-occupied were *more* likely to join unions and parties than average. Although Gallino's sample was almost certainly

biased,¹⁰ the finding maintains its importance and its sociological interpretation is interesting.

This group of bi-occupied is endowed (has endowed itself) with high self-entrepreneurial capacities, which means that it is able to organise in a particularly efficient and effective way its own resources. Which resources? First, time, as it is documented also in the chapter on the family, but also the information necessary to achieve objectives (...). It is simply a kind of complex weaving between actor and system, between individual and collective strategies. It is a lay approach, modern and not traditional, to party membership and the political system. It is not at all coincidental that this behaviour is realised in a larger proportion by the young bi-occupied. (Milanaccio 1982: 322-3)

This interpretation, courageous at the time it was written, finds today some corroboration from the Polish case, and particularly from the Warsaw one. Here, second jobs are basically conventional among industrial workers. This may explain how they can survive with their salaries and Warsaw costs of living, but this is not the issue here. Rather what is interesting is the fact that many union activists and members also have a second job, and that this supplementary experience may actually reinforce workers' awareness and commitment.

I do extra work in different firms, private and not. The relations between employers and employees are a jungle, absolutely a jungle. If the boss has got work, then the employees come to work, if he hasn't, 'well, stay at home'. [hs6]

The conception of trade union commitment described by Gallino and Milanaccio in the '80s, and by the Polish activists in the '90s, suggests that the interference of experiences may be a resource for union commitment and solidarity in a new, 'subjective' way, as I shall define it below. This type of bi-occupied commitment is different from that noticed in Piombino, where, in spite of high unemployment, second jobs are also frequent (60% altogether according to union officers, but including minor countryside jobs). In this case the support for some union claims on pensions or on working hours is purely instrumental. The issue of retirement age is notable.

In the factory there are workers with second jobs, and normally these are the most angry [workers], because those close to the age of retirement who have second jobs hope to take their pension and make the second job full-time. [pf1]

Besides, the amount of working time (including both overtime and second jobs) in Warsaw has consequences that reinforce the dualisation and neo-proletarianisation trends described in the previous chapter.

In my case, in the last month I worked Saturdays or Sundays six times, that is 48 hours, this month I already have 42 hours, we worked both Saturday and Sunday last week, but there isn't any other way to earn extra money. We must earn extra money, because... A man [*człowiek*] who has two jobs, after eight hours here should take a rest, because we know that this is not a light work. From here he runs to the second job, there again he doesn't relax, in fact there is a private boss and again he must be careful. Basically the guy works about 12 hours, with the transport times probably 13, and early in the morning again comes to work. I think that this is why some accidents happen. But you can't keep a family any other way. [hs8]

In this situation of diffuse overtime and second jobs, working time reduction is an uneasy claim. Most workers are more concerned by wages, especially in Poland but also in Italy as reveal surveys on Turin workers (Abburà and Marcenaro 1986; Cerruti and Rieser 1999). Actually, at both Lucchini (in 1993) and Fiat (in 1994) there were cases of general working time reduction in order to maintain the employment levels through the so-called 'solidarity contracts'.¹¹ In fact, these cases are the outcome much more of a communitarian self-defence against redundancy than of a predisposition to working time reduction. This explains why of the two kinds of 'solidarity contracts' (job-security contracts) foreseen by the Italian legislation only the 'defensive' ones (working time reduction to avoid redundancy) have found application. By contrast, the 'offensive' ones (working time reduction to create new jobs) have remained a dead letter.

In Poland, working time reduction was paradoxically more an issue in the past than today. The free Saturdays were one of the most important claims (and successes) of Solidarity in 1980, and the workers still remember now that there was a continuity between the claim of 'free Saturdays' and the claim of a 'free Poland'. Today, the Parliament is probably going to guarantee free Saturdays by the law (this was one of the Solidarity electoral promises in the elections of 1997), but in private companies Saturday overtime is common place.

When Polish workers demand a reduction of working time, this happens mainly for 'humanitarian' reasons, that is in order to protect the workers from over-effort. Therefore, more than a reduction of the working week, Polish Fiat workers want rest pauses to be lengthened. But not only this: Polish workers have their mind also on the distribution of working time across the year. Notably they contest the concentration of overtime in the summer, when the Polish climate allows a better use of free time as well as a number of second jobs. In general, in Poland there is a more 'proletarian' attitude towards working time and towards the demand of working time

reduction. In Italy, by contrast, this issue is starting to assume a meaning of solidarity with the unemployed.

Besides the Polish and the Italian 'dominant' ones, there is still another way to conceive working time, which is quantitatively marginal but of high social importance. This is the attitude of female workers, whose role in trade union renewal will be analysed below. Notably, female workers are much more sensitive towards a flexible reduction of working time. Their demand for part-time work is typical. In the case of the Italian metalworkers the possibility is foreseen only for up to 2% of the workforce and with the exclusion of assembly line workers (in fact in 1996 only 1.2% of metalworkers worked part-time).

1.2. Egalitarianism and solidarity

1.2.1. The slow decline of Italian egalitarianism

Any trade union, and more generally any organisation aiming at a political regulation of economic relations, must have a conception of social 'justice'. The predominant conception in the worker movement, and especially in the Italian and the Polish ones, was the so-called working-class solidarity. This was analysed in chapter 3 while discussing the meaning of class identity. It is now necessary to examine its meaning as a motive for trade union commitment.

In Italy, a particularly deep egalitarianism was considered by Accornero (1992) as simultaneously the main resource for the worker movement of the '70s and the reason for its defeat in the '80s. According to this view, egalitarianism was functional in a heterogeneous productive world where, in the absence of a strong hard-core workforce, the only unifying image was the figure of the 'mass worker' (*operaio massa*). However, in the long run egalitarianism became a burden for the different categories. Attention to imagery and mobilisation strategies is important in order to avoid simplistic structuralist explanations: as a matter of fact, historians (e.g. Hobsbawm 1987) have often pointed out that it is hard to imagine where a 'golden age' of 'organic' solidarity ever actually existed.

In the '70s, the Italian renewal of unionism from below was based on a strong egalitarianism. At the beginning, this contrasted with the previous crafts-dominated

unionism, but eventually welded with it. That egalitarianism had a strong meaning: it was the

indicator of a rejection by ordinary workers of the hierarchical system of qualifications, based on the criterion of a professionalism which with the modern organisation of work they will never achieve. (Regini 1981: 99)

Egalitarianism contested work organisation in the factory. Yet, when the unions around 1980 lost their control of work organisation, egalitarianism also inevitably lost its mobilising power (Baccaro and Locke 1998).

Nevertheless it did not disappear. Today, in big factories like Fiat and Lusi, the old egalitarianism is enduring. This is not completely surprising, since the egalitarianism of the '70s was centred precisely on the figure of the metalworker: it is therefore not strange that it endures in its cradle. However, only the older and more ideological activists defend without hesitation this egalitarianism.

I don't like the quality circles they constituted. The quality, we all make it together. All the workers without distinction, when something goes the wrong way they are the first to signal it. They [the management] have taken some people who are in the quality circle, and they give them a prize once or twice a year. These four, five people get a coffee, but the other fifty who have worked together? I go on saying that this is unfair, if there is a coffee to drink, that coffee should be divided, a drop each, and it should be given to everybody because everybody has contributed to that thing. [mf1]

Apart from this union hardcore, however, egalitarianism starts to be seen as problematic. Many interviewees notice that, with the new work organisation systems and in the situation of union weakness, workers' traditional solidarity has become uneasy. Moreover, the unions must face strong trends to differentiation. Sometimes the egalitarian barricade resists, like when in 1994 the Piemonte Region tried to hire two hundred young workers with lower wages, but was stopped by the unions. A Turin activist mentions that case, and his comment reveals the uneasiness and the fears of the unions.

For instance here in Piemonte they wanted to hire 200 young unemployed with a lower wage and less holidays. In that case there was a rebellion not only of that category but of all the categories, to say that the laws are equal, and eventually the union didn't sign that agreement. *This is a moment of solidarity*, if one signed an agreement like that, then there could be the risk that in all other companies... *The risks of differences must be avoided, because later nobody manages to control them, the union neither.* [mf6]

Equally challenging for the unions are the recent pension reforms, which differentiate between manual and non-manual workers, and furthermore between 'particularly fatiguing' (*particolarmente usuranti*) and 'not particularly fatiguing'

jobs.¹² On this point the unions must take difficult and painful decisions, establishing differences among workers while their calling is to defend everybody indistinctly. The activists are fully aware of these dilemmas.

On fatiguing jobs there will be those who are permanently enraged, because in my opinion not all jobs within the steelworks are fatiguing. I can't think this because I am a driver of special lorries, I work on different shifts. I consider it a fatiguing job, but only up to a certain point because working in the blast-furnace where it's hot and you have the flames in front of you and cold air at the back, that job is more fatiguing than mine. The administrative employee, who has not even a computer in front of him, this is not fatiguing in comparison with my job, and then everybody has his own specificity. (...) I am absolutely convinced that my job is not fatiguing in comparison with the miner's. Consequently, we have to make a scale, and it will be very complicated and those who are not on scale will be permanently enraged. For the union getting involved in this matter will be difficult. [pf2]

The problem is not only the one of making choices. It is also one of different conceptions of solidarity. The rigid defence of equal treatment in a situation of subjective diversity in fact may hide, behind a solidarity discourse, an egoistic defence against unfair competition from weaker categories. Interestingly enough, in Piombino the inferior employment conditions reserved to the youngest employees are accepted by the people directly concerned, and strongly objected to by their older colleagues.

1.2.2. The brusque dismissal of Polish egalitarianism

The Polish union movement of Solidarity of 1980-81 was, like the Italian one, very egalitarian, as illustrated by Laba's (1991) analysis. At that time, Lech Wałęsa kept on saying that 'everybody has one stomach'. However, in the '80s, during Solidarity's underground activity, most activists started to shift to a more 'meritocratic' attitude, while at the same time liberal economic ideas started to gain some ground. In 1989-90, during the 'market shock', the trade unions still tried to defend the minimal real incomes and the basic benefits (especially the seniority ones), but with respect to wage collective bargaining they gradually accepted a deeper differentiation (Czujka 1998).

In the '90s, surveys show enduring egalitarian views among workers as well as in the Polish population as a whole (Gardawski 1996; Zaborowski 1995). In the political debate, the complaint that Poles are too egalitarian and in this way hinder the development of the market economy is recurrent. However, those attestations of egalitarianism are probably less a real orientation than the reaction to a brusque differentiation of standards of living. Still very equal ten years ago, the Polish social

landscape saw a sort of earthquake in the '90s, becoming in a very short period more unequal than most Western societies, including Italy (which is already one of the least equal Western societies). Wage differentials have changed radically, becoming typical of underdeveloped countries.¹³

In fact, the inquiry among the trade unions reveals that the Polish activists are more likely than the Italian to favour pay differentials. This takes two basic forms: a stress on the value of skills, or a simple refusal of solidarity and an explicitly egoistic standpoint. The two following extracts illustrate these alternative patterns.

The people who want to develop professionally are not sufficiently considered. It's just not worth [developing], because we haven't yet elaborated, whether the employer or the union, a pay system capable of rewarding those who want to improve their qualifications. [hs6]

I am not concerned by what happens in the other factories, not even in the other automotive factories, only my factory is important to me because it's here that I get the money. [bs2]

The difference between the two countries is particularly striking on the question of regional differences. Both countries have strong, historically rooted regional discontinuities in economic structure: the North-South one in Italy, the centre-periphery and West-East in Poland. However, the unions deal with these discontinuities in different ways. In Italy, since the '70s, the Italian unions categorically, although recently with increasing difficulty, defend the principle of equal pay levels for the whole country. They refuse any return to the '*gabbie salariali*' (wage cages), the system which until the '60s differentiated wages across the regions. By contrast, in Poland, although in 1980-81 Solidarity fought for equal wages countrywide,¹⁴ today pay differentials of 40% and more exist among regions, and the unions accept them. Some human envy notwithstanding, at Danone the unions from Białystok came to terms with the fact that their Warsaw colleagues should earn 20% more than them for the same jobs. And their argument is surprising for unionists: in Warsaw salaries must be higher not so much because the costs of living are higher, but because *the labour market* is different in the capital. Very rarely can a similar level of acceptance and awareness of market rules be found among the unions of any country.¹⁵

In their concrete behaviour the Polish unions sometimes seem to have definitely abandoned working-class egalitarianism. Not only is industry-level bargaining still embryonic, but plant-level unions are often very jealous of local

information. Often they refuse to give the researcher data on local conditions with the following sort of argument: 'if the unions from other companies noticed that we have better conditions, our situation with the employer would worsen'.¹⁶ Facing the recession of 1998, the union leadership of the Huta Lucchini not only does not think of a sort of '*contratti di solidarietà*', like those implemented in Piombino. They even actively support the redundancy solution (though with some social protection), in order to permit salary increases for those who remain in the factory.

Behind the general discourses of the unions there also is a 'structural' difference between Italy and Poland. The Polish union membership is on average better qualified than the Italian one. The best example is that of maintenance workers, usually more skilled than average. Even passing over the extreme case of Polish Danone (where in Warsaw Solidarity represents almost only highly qualified technicians, and in Bieruń Stary the qualified shift workers have successfully established their own union), the Fiat factories present two diametrically opposite situations. In Poland maintenance workers are usually the core of the unions, while in Italy they are the most sceptical about the unions, as a Fiom activist reports.

Maintenance work allows you to understand the relationship between the skilled workers, who feel themselves a bit more secure, and the line-workers who work at the press and can do only this. You see it from the relationship the maintenance workers have with the union, there is an attitude of real indifference towards the union. [rf4]

This might be partially due to the less advanced organisational level of the Polish unions, still based on workers' 'aristocracy'. Also the former Polish official unions were composed mainly of the higher strata of the enterprise hierarchies. But Solidarity in 1980-81 represented above all the ordinary workers, according to the accounts and inquiries examined in detail in chapter 2. Highly skilled workers and technicians did indeed mobilise too (Kennedy 1991), but their role was visible in the self-managing factories' network (the *Siec*) more than in the union. The current situation is therefore not a legacy of communist times, but a recent evolution.

Recalling the interpretation elaborated in the previous chapter about the alternation experience in post-communist countries, it is possible to suggest an explanation for this trend. In a situation of a sudden and basically irresistible explosion of social differences, the references of egalitarianism broke down. It

became impossible for the Polish union activists to resist differentiation altogether, and they started to try to come to terms with it. Before their Italian counterparts.

1.2.3. Towards a new idea of 'solidarity'?

As already argued during the analysis of class identity (chapter 3), the term 'solidarity' has two distinct meanings, referring respectively to the idea of 'cohesion' and that of 'altruism'. Nowadays, the attention is shifting from the former meaning to the latter one. The problem is that while the first is sufficiently clear, the second is still nebulous.

In the words of its advocates (e.g. Zoll 1992), the 'new' solidarity should join collective rights with attention to individual circumstances. This 'magic' combination is not that easily defined in concrete terms, but analytically it is important to stress that both motives of social justice and recognition of diversity are necessary. In a piece of research on the mentally disabled at work (Meardi 1993), I remarked that these two elements, that I then called 'altruism' and 'tolerance', were not at all correlated. On the contrary, there was an inverse correlation albeit weak. However, only a combination of both attitudes had positive effects on the social integration of the disabled persons.

How does this translate into union policies? These are many fields in which the theoretical problem of a 'new solidarity' is a very concrete problem in everyday union activity: women's work, youth employment, work relations in small companies, atypical jobs, cultural and ethnic differences, disabled and other weak groups in the labour market. The case of international solidarity, which I dealt with briefly in the previous chapter, is illustrative. On this issue famous union leaders themselves speak of a 'new solidarity'. This would be based on both individual and collective rights with the goal of social development, in contrast to the 'old solidarity' consisting in a monopoly of representation directed at avoiding external competition. This orientation, accordingly, should guide international action.

If, for instance, it is impossible to prevent a factory being moved from Italy to Hungary or to Slovakia, it is however possible to claim for the Hungarian or Slovak workers the same rights of organisation, strike, and union membership, as the Italian workers. (Anderson and Trentin 1996: 60)

The implementation of such union policies, however, requires not only some political imagination on the side of union leaderships. Much more, it is a problem of cultural change in the 'body' of the unions. Otherwise, as the already mentioned case of the Italian *contratti di solidarietà* (but also the much praised Renault Eurostrike of 1997, as I argued in chapter 1) has clearly shown, the 'new solidarity' will be realised only when it overlaps with the classic, defensive and collectivist, workers' mechanical solidarity.

In fact, the union activists who perceive the need for such a cultural advance, remark that the trade unions are relatively late.

The union can do it, the Church has done it therefore the union can too. The Church has done a lot of work recently on immigration and the margins of society. It's what they call solidarity. The union too has worked on it, but should do more. [mf6]

Among the unions considered, the Fim-Cisl of Turin is maybe the most engaged on this front. However, its activists underline that this cultural change does not go without difficulties and dilemmas.

The union went away from the problems of the factory. Previously it emphasised the factory, now it emphasises general problems, deals with many different problems. For instance formerly it was absurd to propose in the collective agreement the idea of special leave for the mothers of drug addicts, and now there is this. This is a very positive thing, because formerly this was a deficiency of the union in my eyes. (...) Now it is dealing with social problems, only it is doing it too much. Too much attention to problems like the 740 [Italian income declaration for fiscal purposes], the tax system, the pensions... God forbid, it's OK, there must also be these things, but they must also care about work, be present in the workplace, and I see that there is a deficiency on this. [ri4]

1.2.4. Internal and external differences

The disintegration of class consciousness, described extensively in chapter 3, lets the diversity of the workers appear and become meaningful. The unions face then, phenomenologically, a new subjective reality. Not only is there an objective differentiation of the workforce; this also takes a particular, and worrying, meaning once it is no longer observed through the lens of working class consciousness.

The problems are manifold. Certainly there have always been, at work, differences between men and women, old and young, skilled and unskilled, locals and immigrants. Working class consciousness, however, quite effectively – although often with effects of segregation – combined all these different situations into a stable compromise behind a unifying image, putting specific people in specific places when

it was necessary (this is notably the case with women).¹⁷ Today this cannot be done in that way. The higher justification (the struggle for worker-controlled production, economy and society) is no longer believable: it is no longer clear, as specifically described in chapter 3, who are the workers, who are their exploiters, and what they are fighting for.

As already mentioned about egalitarianism, in this new subjective reality the Poles seem sometimes better equipped than the Italians. Two examples are employees' subcontracting and status differentiation. On the former, in the previous chapter it was shown with various examples that the Polish unions are less terrified by outsourcing, and that with a very pragmatic attitude they try to come to terms with it.

The second example is more complex. The employment relationship is a very regulated and institutionalised one. Unions – which are with the state the main actor of this regulation – remain very sceptical about any modification of the established rules: in most situations the unions have resisted part-time working, out-working, and any atypical regulation (for instance for young employees, or for 'quasi-subordinated jobs'). The Italian unions are a good example of this attitude. The Polish ones, without falling into an indulgent acceptance of the employers' rhetoric on 'flexibility', are more open on this point. They have very recently experienced a deep transformation of employment regulation (the new Labour Code was passed in 1996) and this prevents them seeing these regulations as immutable. As a result, for instance, they accept the use of 'non-dependent work contracts' (*umowy zlecenia*) with an easiness unknown in the Italian unions, rigidly against the equivalent *collaborazioni coordinate* but absolutely unable to resist them and, what is more, to represent employees working under these conditions. This does not mean that the Italian unions are inert on this front. In fact, the Milanese Cgil in 1998 even created a 'union for atypical workers'; but at its inauguration were present only full-time waged union officers. In this framework, the sociologist Sergio Bologna points to the permanence of simulacrum-rules protecting the unions rather than the workers as a worse risk than deregulation itself. In different words, Supiot (1999) affirms that it is advisable to prevent a gulf from forming between employees protected under contract and persons working under other kinds of arrangements that afford less protection.

Until now 'internal' diversity has been considered. This piece of research has also tried to analyse another difference, the international, or 'external', one. The idea that there might be a connection between these two forms of differentiation underlay the third research hypotheses, which will be dealt with in the next section. Following the discussion presented up to now, however, there is at least a logical connection between the two problems. A cross-national unionism would be, by its nature, highly 'encompassing'. It should then necessarily face a number of differences and go beyond mechanical solidarity (Hyman 1999). On this issue, again, the evidence presented in the previous chapters shows that the Poles are not necessarily worse equipped than their richer, and traditionally internationalist, Italian counterparts.

2. From class to the subject?

2.1. *The two sides of class*

2.1.1. The problem of attitudes

The third research hypothesis presented in chapter 1 suggested a link between the ways the trade unions face different types of differentiation. In particular, among the union members of transnational companies, a correlation between attitudes towards internal and cross-national differentiation was expected. In other words, there should have been a sort of 'summation effect' in the attitudes of trade unionists. For instance, activists already open towards generational differences were expected to be more likely also to develop positive attitudes towards foreign workers.

Unlike the two previous ones, the findings do not directly confirm the third hypothesis. This is true in particular as regards female activists and young activists. Although more sensitive to gender and generation differences, these activists are by no means more open towards other groups. This finding is all the stronger as it confirms other surveys on young union members (e.g. Arte 1993). Moreover, there is no link between union commitment and other forms of social engagement: sometimes, these forms of public participation appear as conflicting rather than convergent.

Where I am there is a lady who occupies herself with aid to drug addicts, another one is involved in voluntary work at the Cottolengo [a famous institute for handicapped people], another one dedicates her time to a kennel, she asked me whether I want to adopt a dog. These

people are very disinterested as regards the union, they don't even want to speak of the union any longer, they're fed up, they prefer to engage outside, they're deceived. [mc6]

This situation requires a close examination. The connection between attitudes towards the different differentiation lines, although it does not exist at the *individual* level, might take place at the *social* level. This would be explainable: the individual activists concerned with a particular category are too engaged on that issue to be, for the present, also open on other fronts. However, their particular activity accustoms their union to communication between different groups. Therefore, the identity of their group, if not their personal identity, will be more 'encompassing'.

In this 'revisited' form, the hypothesis seems confirmed by the data. The unions most open towards their foreign counterparts are the Fim-Cisl in Rivalta, the Cobas in Mirafiori and *Sierpień 80* in Tychy, followed by Rivalta Fiom. These unions have given much space to women or to youth. By contrast, the most 'closed' is Piombino Fiom (locked in an old male worker community).

The analysis of how the unions face differentiation cannot be reduced to the study of unions' 'attitudes' or 'values'. Actually, surveys on attitudes towards the unions among specific groups hardly detect the distinguishing factors. For instance, surveys on women's attitudes to union membership concur in stating that women are at least as interested as comparable men in joining unions (Fiorito and Greer 1986; Kruse and Schur 1992). An explanation of women's under-representation in the unions would require then an in-depth analysis of the cultural, motivational and organisational factors which eventually 'make' women different from men in the unions. Similar conclusions may be drawn about Eastern European workers. Surveys in the former GDR indicate a similarity between of Eastern and Western union members (Frege 1996). Nonetheless, the German enlargement changed in the East and the West the way of conceiving the unions: few months before the main topic in the West was the 35-hours a week, but suddenly all the attention was moved to the financing of reconstruction in the East – where on the other hand changes in the trade unions have been most radical.

The next pages will contain an interpretative, in depth investigation of changing motives for union commitment, aiming to define the role of different historical traditions and of different workforce compositions.

2.1.2. The two sides of class: local subject and universalist ideal

The class model of the union movement was characterised not only by a strong egalitarianism or by meta-historical ideals. Although these orientations remained fundamental mobilisation resources, as I discussed in chapter 2 working class consciousness was also rooted in an opposition at work, in other words, in the subjective capacity of the workers to reject domination and to affirm their autonomy, whether in limited defensive ways like the slow-down or in offensive organised ways like unionism.

On the one hand class *dominated* the individuals by assimilating them to a collectivity and subordinating them to an ambitious project. This side of class unionism still appears in unionists' tales.

I didn't have any political idea, I joined the union only like that, to do something, because I was young, I was 24. I didn't have any experience in the union as such, but the only thing I could share was that united in the struggle, in the strikes, starting from that ideology, in any case united it is possible to win the battles against the boss. [mf9]

An extreme case of 'non-subjective' unionism are the rank-and-file members of the former communist unions (while the leaders often display very studied and conscious personal projects).

Formerly there was only one union, I was there and up to now I'm there. I have always been an ordinary member, I've never been in the union board, I don't want to. I profited from the union only a couple of times, I have no privileges. [tm1]

On the other side, however, class was the expression of an individual irreducible aspiration to *autonomy* and *subjectivity*. This distinction of the two sides of class is so important that recently Alain Touraine, by stressing the second one, ended up rejecting the concept of class itself. This rejection seems redundant (and may even backfire due to the risk of idealising such a concrete movement) if the distinction between a *subjective* idea of class and the vulgar Marxist one is made clear, as I tried to do in chapter 2. However, Touraine's assessment is worth a mention because of the importance of the distinction.

Le mouvement ouvrier ne se contente pas de revendiquer de meilleures conditions de travail et d'emploi, ni même de demander le droit de négocier et de signer des conventions collectives; il en appelle à la défense du sujet ouvrier contre une rationalisation qu'il ne rejette pas, mais qu'il refuse de voir identifiée à l'intérêt patronal, et dès la fin du XIX siècle, si on parle de justice sociale, c'est pour indiquer la nécessité de combiner les deux principes de la modernité, la rationalisation et la "dignité" du travail. (...)

La conscience de classe, la classe pour soi, n'est nullement, pour les marxistes, une classe ouvrière consciente d'elle-même, mais la situation ouvrière interprétée par les intellectuels révolutionnaires comme le signe des contradictions du capitalisme et de leur dépassement nécessaire et possible. Lorsque je parle, à propos du mouvement ouvrier, de mouvement social plutôt que de conscience de classe, c'est précisément pour éviter toute confusion avec la pensée marxiste. Je me réfère à un acteur collectif dont une orientation majeure est la défense du sujet, la lutte pour les droits et la dignité des travailleurs. C'est pourquoi la pensée révolutionnaire a tout parlé du prolétariat, autrement dit a défini les travailleurs par ce qu'il n'ont pas: la propriété, tandis que les historiens et les sociologues de l'action ouvrière, comme moi-même, ont montré que le mouvement ouvrier était porté par des ouvriers qualifiés, défenseurs du travail et de l'autonomie ouvrière, et que leur action avait été plus positive que négative, inventant une autre société et ne se contentant pas de critiquer le capitalisme et l'organisation du travail. Un mouvement social est à la fois un conflit social et un projet culturel. (Touraine 1992: 276-279)

The 'positive' side of class was present in the Italian and the Polish traditions. Laba (1991) among others has described the rich cultural production of Solidarity. In everyday activity, Touraine's investigation indicated a strong orientation towards individual autonomy in personal behaviour and even in a 'pedagogical' attitude. In my secondary analysis I found examples like the following story.

A worker comes and says that something happened and that we must do something. Then, we ask him what he has done to arrange it. Did he go to see the foreman, if the problem concerned production? I think that it is better, because this man (*człowiek*) will gradually get used to claiming the things he is entitled to, and this will make work easier to him in the future. [a Gdańsk activist]

If one distinguishes the communitarian and defensive side of class from the offensive and subjective one, it is maybe possible to understand why in some plants, like Piombino or Bielsko, the class discourse has become sterile or even counterproductive, while in other (like Rivalta or Tychy) it still encourages autonomous activity. The distinction between these two legacies of the same patrimony pushes research attention towards the conditions of the emergence of the Subject at work and in the unions.

2.2. The emergence of the Subject at work

2.2.1. The chances of individual autonomy at work

The interviewees often express a subjective reaction *against* the work situation, though not always as many concentrate on political, ideological or technical discourses. As 'subjective' were defined reactions which are not limited to condemnation, but also contain a positive willingness to have an impact on the *status quo*.¹⁸ This mainly occurs in two forms: explicitly, with the tale about the

interviewee's own activity, or implicitly, through the criticism of a widespread passive attitude. The general feature of the subjective attitude is the elaboration of a personal project at work. This goes beyond another, more primary form of subjective reaction to the work situation, that is all the ways in which the workers try to control effort by slow-down practices or the creation of 'productive games' and 'events' in order to give their job at least some of interest.

Subjective attitudes in the unions are not new. They were already present in the past, although often covered by the very 'high' aims of the trade unions. In Solidarity this sometimes took particular forms due to the specific way the communist system repressed the autonomy of the worker and his or her career aspirations.

I had had a vocational education. Later while at work I finished high school, by the way I generally like improving myself, therefore I took a number of supplementary qualifications, such as carrier mechanic, general welder, that is I'm able to serve both electrically and by flue. In the '70s I started with basic courses, I have a number of these supplementary qualifications, electrician's qualifications, maybe in the workshop there is nobody at my level. It was just the first job, because in fact I wasn't registered in Warsaw. I live five km from Warsaw, and I was not allowed to work in Warsaw because the job centre in my municipality gave jobs perhaps in Nowy Dwór, in Legionowo, that is absolutely not on the road. The only company which enrolled people without the mediation of the job centres was the *Huta*, everybody regardless of their education level. Many people started working here for this reason. [hs6]

Nowadays, subjectivity is explicitly expressed with reference either to a personal professional track, or to the interviewee's desire to have an autonomous standpoint on production matters. The first pattern helps to clarify the difference between subjectivity and flexibility. If subjectivity asks for change and conflicts with passive routines, it also implies respect for a personal project and path, for a professional identity and an autonomous life.

Formerly, people I'm not saying with 15 years experience, but with two years experience, performed a few operations, you were still a craftsman. Now, nothing, you do this and this and still something else. People mix everything, people are stressed. It's not good that shop stewards don't know what's going on in the workshop, they send you once to the assembly line, another one to the painting shop... I still might understand if I worked at the heating, here let's suppose I'm heating the seat, tomorrow they displace me and I'll heat the back seat, it would still remain in the framework of a certain competence. But if suddenly you're moved from the press to the assembly line, as with me a year ago, and told to perform a completely different operation, this requires a supplementary effort and is stressful. [tz3]

In the second pattern of subjectivity the stress is no longer on the *worker* but on the human being.

The foreman doesn't like such people, the foremen say directly what they want. They eliminate such people, I was for instance degraded, because I shouted a bit. You see too many mistakes, they don't need such people, the best are those who do what they are told. This is the

difference. They consider the workers' point of view very little. A couple of times I heard 'if you don't like it you can leave', or 'what do you know about it?'. I was actually the youngest worker but this doesn't mean that I can't see, that I can't be better. It was a foreman who said this. The majority of people remark on it, then there is a group of people who never say anything because they prefer remaining still to... They put up with me sometimes, I say what I think, sometimes this is not good, sometimes it is a disadvantage for me. [ta4]

The frequent willingness to have a personal influence on productive matters in Tychy and in Warsaw obliges us to criticise the common view of post-communist workers as passive. In fact, the reality of work organisation under state socialism *promoted* the search for worker autonomy, as suggested by other recent research on work organisation in Poland.

On peut supposer à bon droit que la conscience professionnelle des gens pouvait quand même trouver à s'appliquer dans un contexte général démotivant et de façon encore plus nette que dans les pays occidentaux durant la période forte du taylorisme. Les rythmes de production, généralement irréguliers, dans les pays de l'Est permettaient des interactions, des négociations et des marchandages dans le travail qui aujourd'hui sont devenus un élément indispensable pour réaliser une production plus flexible. (Le Goff 1997: 309)

Most frequently, however, self-definition as a subject at work takes the weaker form of a criticism of others' passive attitudes. The affirmation of self and of personal aspirations is then indirect and implicit.

I notice, however, that every worker in every work station, everybody creates their own routine, if management moves him and gives him another task, it creates a trauma for him. 'I'm in an uncomfortable place, all dirty, but don't try to move me', because he's created his own routine. It becomes very difficult to make people see that there might be a better work situation, the fork-lift trucker will request to remain a fork-lift trucker, the storage worker a storage worker, who works on a dirty and ugly mission will want to stay there, and you disturb him if you give him another job. Everybody makes a niche for themselves, tries to save themselves in their own job, in their own security and also in their own time. We have an assembly line, there are desks, they make their own production, one at 6 o'clock in the morning, bum, bum, bum, at 10.30 has already finished, but you can't tell him to work more slowly. No, you would bewilder him. [rf3]

Some people do not know what they are entitled to, simply somebody came, said 'you must do this', and they have been making it now for ten years. [ta5]

People are oppressed to the point of vegetating, really. The worker comes to work, finishes the job, goes back home, at home again has work, and not everybody has time. [ta11]

2.2.2. ...and possibly even in the unions!

The main problem that arises for the unions is whether subjectivity at work may become a resource for them or not. In fact, trade unions have generally resisted any change in work organisation going in the direction of the worker's individual involvement in productive activity. In this regard, they feared, not without reason, that

these practices would undermine the traditional bases of union power in the workplace. In other words, locked in the 'communitarian' side of union activity they ended up renouncing the 'subjective' one. They very rarely managed to develop an alternative view of organisational change compatible with worker's autonomy and collective rights.

More generally, 'individualisation' has often been viewed with scepticism or even fear by the unions. The emergence of individual preferences is then perceived as an incentive for 'free-riders'. Nevertheless, millions of unskilled or semiskilled jobs, especially in industry, still do not offer a real 'individual' alternative to collective action for social promotion. Therefore, at least in these sectors, individualisation might actually combine with collective action in new forms of solidarity.

In Thuderoz's (1995) definition, subjectivity at work as 'cooperative individualism' joins the two sides of class: personal project and social relations. In-depth interviews offer a good ground to test whether this association is purely speculative (and wishful), or whether there is a common potential ground for the emergence of the Subject behind both work involvement and social commitment.

Table 1 - Distribution of the subjective attitudes

| Italy | | in the trade union | | | Total |
|---------|------------|--------------------|----------|----------------|-------|
| | | Expressed | Rejected | No information | |
| at work | Expressed | 9 | 0 | 6 | 15 |
| | Rejected | 1 | 0 | 4 | 5 |
| | No inform. | 6 | 0 | 26 | 32 |
| | Total | 16 | 0 | 36 | 52 |
| Poland | | in the trade union | | | Total |
| | | Expressed | Rejected | No information | |
| at work | Expressed | 8 | 0 | 4 | 12 |
| | Rejected | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| | No inform. | 2 | 2 | 21 | 25 |
| | Total | 11 | 2 | 26 | 39 |
| Total | | in the trade union | | | Total |
| | | Expressed | Rejected | No information | |
| at work | Expressed | 17 | 0 | 10 | 27 |
| | Rejected | 2 | 0 | 5 | 7 |
| | No inform. | 8 | 2 | 47 | 57 |
| | Total | 27 | 2 | 62 | 91 |

The quantitative distribution of subjective attitudes¹⁹ in the two contexts (at work and in the union) shows a very strong correlation of the two sides, almost

identical in Italy and Poland (Table 1). This might however be only an apparent correlation, due to a rhetorical rather than objective association: the interviewees who develop a strongly subjective discourse on one issue tend to follow similar arguments in other domains. It is therefore more appropriate to take a more in-depth look at the possible link between personal projects at work and in the unions.

One of the most interesting points to emerge from the interviews is the possibility among young workers of moving from a personal project at work to a personal project in the union. In this choice the determining variable is the impact between personal expectations and the reality of a big industry. Work in the factory, in spite of fanfares about the valorisation of the human factor, still offers the opportunity for personal development only to a minority of workers. However, the choice these young workers is not only the outcome of relative failure, and the search for an alternative channel of social advancement. The interviewees seem to have gone through a more complex process involving the development of feelings of opposition, the resistance of an affirmative idea of self, and a will to communicate.

You get to think that in the future you might make a further small step, then you give the most you can, even if you're only on the line. You engage yourself in order to get a better position, for instance there are line assistants who stand in during the twenty minutes [of pause]. I want to be a shift-substitute, or a maintenance or repair worker, where it's more quiet. Until 1990 everything was quiet, then the protests about the canteen started. Then the problems started. The boss said something, promised something, but he didn't keep to it. I tried to do as he said, but I felt humiliated. I made my first protest after three years and since that moment I've understood that I'm not worth so much. I gave everything and I always said yes, OK, but after in fact nothing improved, I remained on the line. [ri1]

I entered with a lot of expectations, many of them wrong. I thought that the company, being a big company, would organise some training, that there would be more chance to get on, also because I have a vocational training as an engine-mechanic, I need two years to get my diploma. During the first two years I kept asking the foreman whether it was possible, but he always said no. At Fiat I see a number of young employees who have diplomas but who are not taken into consideration, they look more at personal ties (...). I tried a bit at the beginning to see whether I had any chance of working on the company side, but I was deceived, and then I was proposed for activity in the union and I accepted because at the personal level it was also an experience, also of information. [ri5]

Apart from these paths followed by the youngest workers, in several cases the activists show a strong interest in the personal aspects and in the affirmation of self. In this context the 'technical' side of union activity acquires a higher connotation of skill development and personal improvement.

Attention to the individual also involves a shift in daily union action: from general regulation to the evaluation and defence of individuals.

And we must take into consideration workers' age, that a worker can make it in a certain post, another one may have problems because it is known that they have for instance different manual skills, this is not considered [by the management], he must work and that's all. [tz2]

In the Cobas case at Mirafiori, particularly influenced by New Left culture, this attention to personal cases becomes very important. In their tales, the highest level of union activity is intervention in cases where it is not the worker's exploitation but human subjection which matters.

This is something which personally I dislike even more than work, that is seeing the foreman daring to say certain things to the workers. If they see that a woman is weak, they allow themselves to say things which might be denounced. [mc6]

There is a story of a girl at Fiat, which if she is not confirmed [at the end of the temporary contract] we should write a book about, about the things she had to endure. To put it simply, the girl had the misfortune to have her father die, and her mother had heart disease. When she went to ask for unpaid leave and said 'my mother has heart disease, I have to bring her to a cardiologist', a supervisor answered saying 'now that we've finished with your father do we start with your mother?'. The story is so long, really a book should be written, if the girl is not confirmed in June we'll put out everything. When this girl told us in detail what she'd suffered, they even said to her that when she went out during the night, and she went to hospital to visit her father, they said that she went to prostitute herself. She suffered so many troubles that it was shocking listening to her, after all such a naive girl who comes to tell such a story, 22 years old, not even a member of the union. [mc2]

The subjective attitude to trade union commitment implies, besides the aim of autonomy at work, also an aim of autonomy *from* the union as an organisation. This element characterises new forms of political participation not only in the trade unions. Ion (1997) speaks in this regard of '*engagement distancié*', in which the individual invests him- or herself in the organisation, without however delegating the duty of thinking in his or her place. On the same lines, Wieviorka (1998) argues that today engagement must authorise disengagement, and permanently combine with it. In this sense, the criticism of the organisation described in chapter three as a component of the disintegration of class consciousness may become a natural feature of relationship to the union by the new members.

When the boundaries of the unions become imprecise both collectively (because it is difficult to count members, sympathisers and activists) and individually (because it is unclear *to what extent* people are committed) the separation between the experience of work and life-sphere experience must be revisited. The problem is no

longer that of the end of work, but that of an interplay: concern with work and concern with other domains are not mutually exclusive, and can even be reciprocally reinforcing. In this way, cross-work identities, previously considered as a nuisance for the unity of the unions, may bring new resources to union commitment. The most relevant cases are women and the young. Women are here probably the most important precursor of change in trade union commitment: the female union committees created in many Italian plants in the '70s constituted for the first time a complete break with the traditions of working class organisation (Beccalli 1984). Today, an important autonomous women's committee encountered during the inquiry is that of the Fiom women at Rivalta. The importance of female participation is so important that will be treated in more detail in the next section.

The second case is that of the young. A vanguard in this regard is Rivalta Fim, which created a lively committee of young workers. But also in Piombino, in the Fiom, there were some attempts in this direction. The demands of young workers are all but silent.

But it would be enough to have something, to organise, as I proposed during the last meeting, a meeting *only* for the young, even outside working time. We might explain that, possibly using terminology which is not too political, so to say a bit easy, explain what the union would like to introduce in order to achieve an agreement with the company. This might be a step closer to the young. [pf5]

Particularly interesting is the case of the young Fiom Siderco activist [sf2] who started his activity in the union explicitly in order to defend young employees, who had worse employment conditions than their senior colleagues. He was motivated by a feeling of discrimination, that is he entered the union as a young person, and not as a worker, just like the female activists who engaged themselves as women rather than as workers.

At a time when non-work-based identities are becoming important for the unions, these organisations should start taking care of cultural variables. In a post-industrial society cultural (in a broad sense) movements are expected to become more important than class- or interest- based ones. In Italy, as a matter of fact, there is an increasing differentiation of associative behaviour, no longer depending on consolidated 'interests' (Iref 1997). Poland is however not 'backward': apart from a few strike waves in 1992 and 1993, the main social mobilisations and public debates

after 1989 took place on issues such as abortion, regionalism, violence, State-Church or Polish-Jewish relations. In the tense presidential campaign of 1995 (the elections with the highest turn-out since 1989) social and work issues were almost absent and did not differentiate the two candidates Kwaśniewski and Wałęsa, while the issues of the evaluation of past history and of civic rights were at the centre of the attention.

There is no place in this thesis for a comparison of different social movements. What by contrast can be confirmed is that for the unions it becomes difficult to remain indifferent towards non-work issues, whether the ecological problems of Piombino, the regional autonomy of Bielsko-Biała or intercultural relations with a foreign employer.

Even the apparently old-fashioned Polish national identity becomes a matter of reflection. In spite of the rhetoric on globalization, as European-level social movements wait to emerge the national level remains the main field for political participation. A pragmatic understanding of this simple fact might allow the unions to avoid the choice between the Scylla of nationalist withdrawal and the Charybdis of rhetorical internationalism. More generally, the failure of the communist regimes in Central Europe is also the failure of the imposition of a monolithic system on one of the most complex regions of Europe. In this way, the experience of Solidarity recalls by its nature that cultural diversity should be taken into account by the labour movement.

Not only this. The Polish activists, from time to time, still make use of a typical rhetoric, inherited from the experience of Solidarity in the '80s, which was already mentioned in chapter 2. Notably, they talk of the defence of the *human being* (*człowiek*) against any form of domination. There is in this a potential for the further development of subjective orientations. It is not coincidental, probably, that the Polish unions devote a relatively large amount of time to dealing with individual needs.

Another feature of the 'subjective' side of the unions is the importance of communication. This has always been an indispensable resource for union organisation in the workplace, but nowadays it has a more complex meaning and role. It is not only aimed at organising and mobilising: it is necessary to construct a single reality from different experiences. For subjectivity in political participation

communication is even more important than for subjectivity at work. The availability of communication is a fundamental variable in the integration of marginal groups at work, and it still constitutes the main problem for trade union transnational action, as shown in the previous chapter. This point maintains its importance at the international level: as argued by Hyman (1999), international solidarity requires the reconstitution of unions as discursive organisations which would serve more as networks than as hierarchies. While the technical job of unionist is elevated to the level of a personal vocation, with the emergence of subjectivity communication is elevated to the level of dialogue.

At the end of this description, it is possible to suggest an image of a 'subjective' pattern of union commitment more precise than theories of the 'Subject'. It is still impossible to state whether this pattern will eventually impose itself, but it can be declared that it is at least *possible*, as it was met in almost a third of the interviewed activists. This pattern, open towards differentiation following the fragmentation of the working class, includes the following attitudes:

- the presence of a personal, autonomous project;
- the reference to the individual more than to the 'social';
- the affirmation of autonomy from the organisation;
- openness towards non-work based identities, and to cultural factors;
- the conception of communication as dialogue.

The sociological task now becomes to analyse the conditions for the emergence of this attitude. In order to make the first steps on this probably long research path, I shall devote some space to the most interesting case in this regard: that of women activists.

2.3. *The decisive divide: the unions & gender*

2.3.1. Female union commitment

This piece of research, by choosing as case studies six plants of traditional big industry, the theatre of the traditional workers' movement, unfortunately shares one of the main limits of most work sociology: gender bias. The sociology of work has always tended to concentrate on mainly male big industry, and contemporary

academic industrial relations research still focuses on regimes that cover mainly male manual workers (Rubery and Fagan 1995). Thus, women make up only 9 out of 91 interviewees (3 in Poland and 6 in Italy), and they all come from Fiat (where women are around 15% of the manual workforce) as the steelworks are absolutely single sex.

However, the presence of women acquires a central importance in the light of the discussion developed until now. Not only do macro-sociological studies today converge in considering gender differences as important as the traditional 'class' ones (e.g. Crouch 1999). Gender difference is also, for its general and basic human nature, in a way 'antecedent' to any conception of difference.

L'autre sexe n'est-il pas, pour chacun, le visage le plus proche de l'étranger? Il est donc crucial, politiquement, de savoir comment est reconnue ou au contraire déniée la différence des sexes. Car de la façon dont on pense l'autre sexe dépend la façon dont on pense l'autre en général. (Agacinski 1998: 12)

There is not here the space to exhaustively discuss the complex issue of the relations between unions and women. In any case, the history of these relations has been at least uneasy (see among others Milkman 1990; Maruani and Nicole 1989; Heery and Kelly 1988; Beynon and Blackburn 1984; Roberts 1984; Pollert 1981), although in Italy in some regards the situation is better than elsewhere (Beccalli 1984). What is here directly relevant, however, is the role of female activists. Traditionally underrepresented in the industrial workforce (that is the image of the working class) and in the unions, especially at the higher hierarchical levels, women have not had an easy time in the unions. Fantasia (1988) describes how many married women committed to the unions reported feeling guilty about the time they spent away from their children. The worker movement, which with its policies contributed to the enduring discrimination against women, coherently although rarely consciously also resisted the advancement of women in its own ranks.

Poland is no exception. In spite of some notorious cases,²⁰ few working women (unlike numerous intellectual women) played a leading role in Solidarity in 1980-81. At the rank-and-file level their role was very important, but usually unheralded and dismissed (Long 1996). One of the protagonists of that movement, Jacek Kuroń, in his memoirs recalls as typical the case of a factory where the almost entirely female workforce passively followed an entirely male strike committee (Kuroń 1993).

Today, in Italy as well as in Poland the old diffidence of the unions towards women endures in some activists, in both countries.

The employer knows all too well that every strike fails, he says 'strike 3-4 days, and in any case you'll succumb because you go home and *the wife* will tell you 'give me the money for the rent, gas, electricity'. [bs5]

I have also been a member of the *cassintegrati* committee. In those meetings those were mainly women [workers' wives]. There were incredible fractures, they urged us to go back to the factory, to keep our heads down, because they couldn't afford to go on until the end of the month... [pf2]

Male activists see women as the weak link in the chain, as responsible for defeats. A new feature is that they sometimes see them as responsible for recent threats to workers' established practices.

Then there was the terrible contract [of 1974], I remember we 200 hours and more, in order to give women parity. Now, I don't have anything personal against them, but they have become quite flexible, they come here at 4 o'clock in the morning. [mf8]

Recently in the unions the role of women has been regarded in a more positive way, and women have started to find new opportunities (Cunnison and Stageman 1995). This has happened especially in the United States, where unionism was characterised for a long time by a particularly strong discriminatory attitude towards women.

Strategies for renewal have often been influenced by modes of action, forms of organization, mechanisms of representation and communication and types of discourse that were originally developed with women wage earners in mind. (Howell and Mahon 1996: 500)

More concretely, in the North-American public-sector unions, the increasing presence of women has been seen as a factor enabling the intersection of urban life politics, gender relations, and the private and public sector labour movements (Johnson 1995). On a more general basis, women's, and feminists', action is considered by Touraine (1992; 1997) as most favourable for the development of new cultural, 'subjective' social movements.

The interviews with female activists, especially those collected in Italy, show a stronger presence of subjective discourses. Attention is paid to a variegated range of demands, sometimes uncommon, while instrumental and economicist attitudes are rarer, contrary to the historical view of women's union commitment:

Many women belong to the union, but most appear to have been concerned only with their wages and their domestic affairs, they simply paid their small subscription as a kind of

insurance against the day when they might find themselves in dispute with the management.
(Roberts 1984: 147)

Most remarkably, in some interviews gender identity is put in the foreground. Many of the women are motivated primarily by a sense of discrimination at work: that is, they are motivated as *women* rather than as *workers* (a similar conclusion could be reached about some young activists in Piombino). The employer is then criticised in both class and gender terms.

A CP [the lowest hierarchical level of technicians] made the gross mistake of giving birth. When she came back, they took off her CP overalls. They told her 'we know that now you won't be that available'. Fiat anyway is masculinist, very masculinist. [mc6]

The commitment takes then a much more personal dimension, where the affirmation of one's own identity is fundamental.

Then I didn't like them to have won, and so I reacted in a certain way. Actually, I think I caused some turmoil in the personnel department, because they also knew me in Mirafiori, where some personalities seemingly asked for explanations from my supervisor as to my choice [of joining the union]. I hope, that they've really asked about it. [rf5]

Women activists are glad to be *women activists*, that is also in comparison with their male colleagues.

There is a lot of interest among women. Maybe they see the problems more closely, with a freer eye than a man, who puts in first place various interests, that is if you're a member or not. If you're a member, 'OK, let's talk', otherwise you must first join the union. They are more direct, more determined on these matters. In contrast, we're sometimes less demanding, we consider relationships with people more important, understand people in order to... [rf6]

The female activist identity displays two sides, just like the worker movement: one made of weakness and domination, the other of potential revolt and subjectivity. These two sides are often interwoven.

A united union is one that does the right things and where we're all equal, men and women, because in my opinion this difference exists... Above all in the factories because it's right that a woman has the same rights since by now we do the same jobs. But we see that the rights are only rights to work, because when there is overtime to do the woman is the first to be called. The man maybe because he has a second job refuses, women are more passive when they hear I put you here I put you there (...) The 4th qualification levels among women are extremely rare (...) After all it is a matter of principle, not of money: I do the same job, why do you get it and I don't? Like dent-removing, I asked to be trained, 'no, because you're a woman'. What's the difference, I can try, then maybe I can't do it but it's right to try. Women are much more combative because they are treated in a worse manner. OK, I'm much more feminist, but if they know they are right they impose their right. After all the man joins the union only when he sees that he's got some problem, possibly of health. For the woman the issue is maternity or the impositions from the foremen, like 'anyway you're a woman, we don't care about it, shut up', and this is wrong. [ri8]

The last extract introduces a point which might be seen as an extreme case of a new subjective way to join work and life-sphere experiences in trade union commitment. During the inquiry four women (three in Italy and one in Poland), from four different unions (Rivalta Fiom, Rivalta Fim, Mirafiori Fiom, Tychy *Sierpień 80*), were found to have started their union activity after the birth of their first child, and were motivated in the first place by the experience of maternity. This contrasts with the traditional view of women's attitudes to the unions, which see family roles and union roles as conflicting. Traditionally, and still in the '70s in Italy, the common view was that if a woman ever became involved with a union, this was an unmarried woman; as soon as she had children (if not as soon as she got married), she would leave work, and if she didn't leave work, at least she would leave the union. A qualitative piece of research is unable to suggest what is the statistical relation between maternity and union commitment. However, it is able to show that a relation contrary to the one traditionally expected is *possible* and seen by the people concerned as *normal*. A family experience such as maternity may, instead of drawing the attention away from work, 'open the eyes' of the worker as to the nature of work relations.²¹

Everything was fine, then I took maternity leave and when I came back, how to say it, the factory was overturned. It was like starting from the beginning again (...). You remain still maybe for the first few years. Then when I came back from maternity and I saw that they put me on the night shift although the child was little, they were not allowed but they did it, because of my ignorance I said OK, that is there wasn't a union in my place to help me, and they exploited it. When I came here to Rivalta [from Mirafiori] I said that's enough, now... that is, this helped me to grow up, at work if I know that I'm right I don't care (...).

While you're young, Fiat is happy, then when you're no longer necessary you're discarded. I've seen it after maternity: I was no longer necessary, and what does it mean? It's like saying you don't have the right to have children. I personally paid the cost of it, if I had a second child I would think about it, because it's not right that you come back after maternity and you lose your rights in the workplace. [ri8]

I started [to work for the union] because basically I felt really persecuted in the last few years. After coming back from the maternity leave I was penalised a lot because I didn't do overtime at work. According to my supervisor, I should have worked overtime in any case, remained in the evening and this kind of thing, and with an 18-months-old daughter it's clear that a woman can't (...). I joined the union because I felt discriminated against, a target. When there was some *cassa integrazione* [temporary unemployment] it was always for me. [rf5]

On these issues, work- and political sociology strongly need a contribution from gender studies and the sociology of the family. Only from that point of view is it possible to advance an interpretation of the increasingly 'chosen' rather than

'natural'(and thus increasingly *subjective*) character of family events. Subsequently, personal choices may favour forms of personal commitment. In fact, reflections on gender differences have already pointed to the subjective potentials of the maternity experience.²² It is simply the case that the sociology of work has remained unaware of it.

These points on the potential of female subjectivity for the unions do not imply that women automatically have on any issue a somehow more advanced orientation than men. On the contrary, I already recalled that most women display a very low solidarity towards other groups, starting with the foreign workers. In this regard any optimistic 'messianic' expectation from female activists should be avoided. In the past, messianic views already concerned the working class which was supposed, by breaking its chains, to break the chains of *every* domination. Similar messianic hopes were invested in colonised populations or, in the East, the dissidents (not to speak of the messianic halo which much less democratic movements attribute to themselves). In all these cases, such very high expectations were eventually disappointed, with the outcome of favouring counter-reactions (negative judgements on the unions often seem due to an unconscious comparison with labour movement iconography). In the case of women's commitment, radical accounts sometimes state, for instance, that women would:

bring quite distinct modes of action and practice to trade unions, which have the potential of harnessing working women in support of the labor movement's version of an alternative, more human, post-Fordist future (...), [and] exemplify a new political style and a new organizational paradigm which emphasize workplace collectivity, political energy, a less bureaucratic, more 'dialogical' organizational style and a redefinition of the value of work itself. (Howell and Mahon 1996: 506).

There is not (yet?) evidence of such an idyllic female pattern to union commitment. However, women are starting to bring their specific contribution to trade union agendas and bargaining platforms. Rivalta Fiom women, notably, are particularly active on the issue of working time organisation.²³ Potentially, this may bring about a reconsideration of the established 'protective boxes' of work regulation, and push the unions to repoliticisation and the elaboration of a new 'gender contract' (O' Reilly and Spee 1998). We are not yet at this level, however. Currently, the positive and indispensable role of women in the trade unions is different, independent from the individual merits or faults of female activists. It lies in the fact that women,

with their active presence, bring *diversity* into the union and stimulate *communication*. The link is indirect, but not less important for this. Similarly, life-sphere experiences are not automatically positive for the unions, the opposite being rather the case. But when these external factors eventually touch union commitment, they force the organisation to change, or at least to listen.

In this way, the presence of women in the unions at the Turin and Tychy Fiat factories, in contrast to the entirely male steelworks of Piombino and Warsaw, helps to explain the higher general openness of their unions.

2.3.2. How Polish women catch up with those in the West, but in their own way

The case of Polish working women requires a specific note, although unfortunately the female presence among the interviewees is too small for an empirical discussion. It must be recalled nonetheless that gender relations at work in the state socialist countries took a particular meaning.

In first place, those countries constructed a situation never achieved in capitalist countries in peace times: the full employment of women in the formal sector of the economy.²⁴ However, a high gender segregation endured (women were for instance almost completely absent from the party central committees) and an unequal division of housework persisted (Łobodzińska 1995). As a result, contemporary surveys (notably, the 1994 ISSP module) reveal that in post-communist countries opinions about women's role are much more conservative than in the West, even in comparison with a relatively traditionalist and patriarchal country like Italy (Cichomski, Morawski and Zawadzki 1996).

This point (like many others already discussed in the previous pages) can only partially be explained by the supposed 'backwardness' (or traditionalism) of post-communist societies, which would not yet have entered into modernity.²⁵ Actually, Eastern Europeans are not very traditionalist on another gender-related issue, that is sexual permissiveness. The same surveys show that the post-communist cluster (Russia, Poland, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Hungary, Czech Rep.) is much more liberal in the sexual sphere than the English-speaking cluster (USA, Ireland, Canada, Great Britain, New Zealand, Australia), which is by contrast liberal with respect to women's roles in

the economy and in the home. This point remains valid, although less strongly, for Poland which is the least permissive in the post-communist group.

An alternative explanation, drawing on the interpretative schemes sketched in this thesis, requires attention to both opposition identities and subjective experiences. The main point is the fact that female employment in state socialist countries *was not chosen*, and was perceived as forced. For this reason, after the communist breakdown 'freedom' for working women also meant 'freedom to stay at home', at least in (rare) cases when the husband's income was sufficient.²⁶

Moreover, this kind of forced employment in societies which were in any case dominated by men, perpetuated 'micro' forms of segregation and domination which are evident in the workplace. In the Polish case, this is certainly reinforced by the Catholic culture, although the distinct influence of each of the two factors cannot be easily evaluated.

Nowadays, paternalistic attitudes towards women are frequent among the (male) Polish union activists.

A new problem is that the lightest posts, which are suitable for women, for older workers, for people with health problems, fall into the so-called *tercjaryzacja* [outsourcing]. At Fiat these posts have already become very scarce. There is a surplus of women (...) Many women work now for instance in the paint shop, the work conditions are such that they can't have children. [tp1]

Women themselves, somehow, often become accustomed to this attitude.

I don't know how it is now on the assembly line. I worked on the assembly line in the years 81-83, it was completely different. In particular, I was lucky to have the colleagues I did, there were few girls and the boys tried to help us. [ta4]

The tales from the Fiat plants introduce the issue of women's condition after communism. It is still disputable whether, and to what extent, women's conditions have worsened after 1989 (van der Lippe and Fodor 1998; Titkow 1998). As to blue-collar female workers in the factories, however, it is clear that working time organisation has worsened (with the subjection to shifting time) and that most women have been moved from indirectly to directly productive tasks. This situation is confirmed by other studies on Polish working women (Heinen 1995).

In this situation Polish women, given the general identity of Polish workers described in the previous chapter, might become a sort of 'proletarians among the proletarians'. The potential for subjectivity found among the Italian women seems to

be neutralised by the joint effect of poor mobilisation resources, the reaction to the former system of female full employment, and the Catholic culture. The outcome of this manifold situation has suggested to Polish sociologists to define working women as 'happy slaves,' with implicit very conservative consequences (Domański 1999).

As a matter of fact, female officers in Solidarity are less numerous than in the Western trade unions (*Tygodnik Solidarność*, n.46, 1998). According to recent surveys (CBOS 1999), the unionisation rate in Poland is 24% for men and only 14% for women.

The situation is however not completely dark. Research carried out on a particularly disfavoured group of women (the unemployed) through sixty in-depth interviews in Łódź and Warsaw reveals a different reality (Heinen 1995). According to this research, Polish women claim their professional activity as their own and attribute to it a decisive weight in the construction of their identity, far from defining themselves principally on the basis of their place in the family, as opinion polls would suggest. The active and positive attitude of Polish unemployed women, in comparison with unemployed men, is confirmed by other sources (Janowska, Martini-Fiwek and Góral 1992).

Even in the more extreme case of Russia, where the situation both of the labour movement and women is incomparably worse than in Poland, some potential ground for women's participation has been detected (Bridger, Key and Pinnick 1996). First of all, many Russian women,²⁷ even while suffering the knocks of the process of change, are displaying levels of ingenuity, tenacity and adaptability which sit uneasily with the notion of 'victim' so often used. Furthermore, the success of the party 'Russia's Women' indicates that there is a possibility of reinterpreting, in a more subjective way, traditional gender ideology. 'Russia's Women', for instance, has gained substantial support by affirming that Russian women in politics and in economics are more trustworthy than the often heavy drinking men.

The interviews collected at Fiat Auto Poland do not constitute evidence in this sense. Two cases (an activist from *Metalowcy* and a newly arrived activist of *Sierpień 80*) show how Polish women can respectively start a personal career project in the union or take difficult subjective decisions about commitment (the second woman, a

single mother, had recently quit *Metalowcy* and joined the militant *Sierpień 80*). The Danone case also revealed a multisided situation: women are marginalised by Solidarity in Warsaw, but they surprisingly make up the majority of the Solidarity plant executive in Bieruń Stary.

2.3.3. A female workers' revolt: the Cotex case

An even partial assessment of this issue required further research. For this reason a situation of important female-led industrial action was observed in Winter 1998-99. This also allowed us to check Kuroń's already mentioned opinion about the Polish female workers being typically directed by male activists. The case is that of Cotex, a textile factory employing 1,200 people of whom 1,000 are women in Płock (central Poland)²⁸.

Cotex, which previously produced for the Soviet Union market, fell into a deep crisis in the '90s. Today, wages are at the minimum level allowed by the law, and rumours of imminent bankruptcy grow even louder. The militant National Solidarity 80 union, sometimes supported by the other three unions (OPZZ, Solidarity and a union of foremen) but often opposed by them, has been very active in the last few years. It has also organised very spectacular forms of protest like the blockade of the town bridge, a very important artery of the region. In Summer 1998, National Solidarity 80 obtained the appointment of an agreed director. However, his activity very soon met the opposition of the other three unions, who asked for and obtained his removal by the voievod in November 1998. National Solidarity 80 refused to accept the director's removal and occupied the factory trying, without success, to maintain production. Actually, protesters rejected the term 'occupation' considering the director's removal illegitimate: in their opinion, they were working and the other unions were boycotting the factory. The action was ended by the intervention of the police the 12th of March 1999. The Solidarity 80-backed director was removed and production started again, but Solidarity 80 maintained its opposition role within the factory. Also thanks to the effective 'political bargaining' power acquired by the unions on the battlefield, there is today a strong interest of the public ownership in saving the company.

The Cotex case is extremely interesting for a number of reasons, like the nature of the conflict around restructuring and privatisation. However, what matters here is the gendered nature of the industrial action. Cotex represents a splendid case of women's self-organisation and mobilisation during work conflict. National Solidarity 80 is composed mainly of unskilled female workers and is led by a woman; among the founding members there was only one man. Hundreds of workers (about two thirds of the workforce), almost entirely women, occupied for four months (of winter) an almost unheated factory. All of the 'security service', involved in real battles with the non-occupying workforce and the police, were women. The self-organisation and resistance capacities were absolutely outstanding.

Their adversaries were the mostly male foremen, technicians and former directors, all charged with stealing the factory. As it often happens in Eastern Europe, a big state-owned company is invisibly privatised through the creation of small commercial and service firms. These are established by company employees and managers, who exploit the commercial links or the technical knowledge and machinery of the company. This is a continuation under new legal forms of the shadow economy practices of the last period of state socialism, and forces the 'mother' company to endure the competition of its own employees. At Cotex, these satellite/parasite firms were created by male technicians and managers, and the unions opposing National Solidarity 80 are also led by men. Moreover, the local inhabitants to whom I informally talked about the events at Cotex commented that the conflict had no solution because 'Polish women do not surrender'. The gender self-identity of the militants (the word is well-suited in this case) is explicit in the tales of the fights against the non-occupying workers or the police, when the general charge is 'they beat women'. By contrast, there is no sign of explicit ideological feminism as it is known in the West: Madonna images replace the Western protest iconography.

The heteronomy of which Kuroń spoke does exist, but only at the political level. National Solidarity 80, which split from Solidarity 80 in 1994, is also an extreme-right organisation led by Marian Jurczyk, one of the historical leaders of Solidarity, a Senator and (at the times of the events) Major of Stettin.²⁹ Jurczyk sent to Płock his closest collaborator (a man) as press-agent of the Cotex workers. However,

the mobilisation was clearly led by the local female activists. Only, their action, alone, did not reach the political level without an external contribution. The work-level of the conflict was the most important: the protesting women did not claim wage increases but were only defending their jobs and their workplace, refusing any measure of 'assistance' from the state. In addition, while nationalism is the main feature of National Solidarity 80 at the political level, I was treated very kindly in spite of my foreign citizenship.

The sociological interpretation is not that easy. The events at Cotex might be seen as an extreme case of proletarian revolt, given the wages, the company situation, the peripheral position and, why not, the sex of the protagonists. It might also be seen, however, as proof of the reactive capacities of Polish women, not ashamed of using national and traditional identity resources, and of their attachment to a role at work.

When this thesis was already completed, important events confirmed the potentialities of Polish working women for developing subjective action. I refer notably to three different, and apparently unrelated, events of summer 1999. The first is the strong and relatively successful nurses' movement, which differently than any other employees' mobilisation in Poland in the last years took a strong but independent political dimension (against the health-care reform) and received the sympathy of 80% of the population. This movement used an explicit gendered (female declination and conjugation) language, forgetting that there also are (rare) male nurses. The second fact was the opening, with many years of delay, of a participate debate on the role of women in Solidarity during the '80s. This debate, which took place mainly in the pages of the newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza*, revealed how women's social role has been occulted by the political and cultural elites before and after 1989. The last event was the protest campaign, launched by the women's magazine *Wysokie obcasz*, against the reform of the pension system. Buzek's reform, introducing the contributory system while maintaining an anticipated age of retirement for women (60 years instead of 65), under the appearances of 'protection' discriminates women, who eventually receive much lower pensions. It is striking that in Italy, a country with important traditions of feminist mobilisation, an equivalent reform (Dini's reform in 1995) did not provoke reactions (although it has to be noted that Italian women,

according to the Law n. 903 of 1977, can, if they want, continue to work after retirement age, maintaining the previous job security; Polish labour law is not as much definite on this point). In a way, Italian women and feminists turned out to be more conservative and 'paternalist' than the surprisingly more egalitarian Polish counterparts.

2.4. Seeking a political role for the unions

2.4.1. The decline of class politics

Some of the 'subjective' demands emerging from workers and activists are apt to motivate a re-politicisation of the unions. The best example is that of working time reduction, which in both countries is first of all the object of a political, parliamentary debate. Pointing in the same direction are many elements of working class disintegration, which require a new 'social contract' and the necessarily political treatment of problems like social exclusion, unemployment, and welfare reform. In this situation of new political problems, the difficulties encountered during the plant-level comparison could be a manifestation of the need to change the level of analysis. If plant and company based models of unionism are fragile, the unions still face political problems at the central level in different ways according to national tradition. In spite of any decentralisation, therefore, the political level would be the only one on which an attentive comparison might be carried out.

This approach does not conflict with an investigation of the shop-floor level of action, which remains fundamental for union loyalty. What can be tried is a conjunction of the two levels, that is an investigation of how politics are understood by the rank-and-file members.

This piece of research, concentrated on personal experiences and on the plant, does not provide sufficient materials for assessing the differences between the political activities of the Italian and Polish unions. This is not only due to the fact that the political framework in Poland was still under construction at the time of the inquiry, and therefore unsuitable for precise comparative analysis. It also stems from the fact, which is an important finding itself, that union activists rarely speak *spontaneously* of politics when describe their experience. Moreover, they habitually

repeat (in both countries) the commonplace that 'the trade union is the trade union, and politics is politics'.

There are of course exceptions, but as shown in chapter 3 they come in most cases from older activists linked to an older model of engagement. In the past, a class character allowed unionism to play an autonomous political role more than a 'business' one. Today, however, political identity is an obstacle rather than an aid to unions' participation in the political debate on new social issues. Rather than pushing towards the elaboration of a new social contract, this politically-based identity locks the unions into the defence of the old one. Using the definitions drafted above, it expresses the defensive and communitarian side of the working class rather than the subjective one.

The proof of a decay of class-based political unionism comes from the unions closest to working class consciousness, that is *Sierpień 80* and *Federacja*. If class was a suitable basis for political engagement, these should be the organisations with the clearest political awareness. In fact, the bewilderment there is particularly striking.

Those from Solidarity say that on their side they will try to obtain something in the Sejm [lower chamber of the Polish parliament], in the parliamentary commission on privatisation, while we as a trade union have stayed in the queue for access to it. It's not politics, it's contacts with the politicians which is necessary, not the parliamentary elections like for Solidarity (...). In the mines, in the steelworks, people may fight, but this does not interest us so much, what happens there. We are interested first of all in what we do for ourselves, this is the most important thing, we don't care about politics. Maybe, if it is necessary to give support when some mine or foundry strikes, we'll do it, but first of all, there is the factory. [ta1]

The union should be interested in politics, but when the laws are not good for the workers, I don't know whether they should vote for or against. [ta4]

It's necessary to adjust certain things, it's very useful for the union to have somebody in parliament. [ta5]

The union organises meetings with the local MPs, from different parties, it is the local representatives who matter (...). The unions cannot have an influence on the general situation, what can trade unions do with the economy? [ta6]

The union should show interest in what happens in Poland, in some form of protest, go to Warsaw, blockades. Participation in politics is rather inconvenient (...). The union should not be in the Parliament because it is the protector of the worker, it can't vote laws, can it, which would damage that worker. [ta7]

It should not be in politics, but have an influence on politics. There are trade union forms of influence, strikes, demonstrations, only these forms remain to us. [ta8]

I don't read newspapers. I read only the jobs ads., this interests me. [tz2]

This impression is confirmed at the central level, where *Sierpień 80* political activity is not very clear. Some leaders I met defined the union as 'left-wing', but the union organises demonstrations and appears to have good relations with the right-wing party KPN.³⁰ As a matter of fact, the political affiliates of *Sierpień 80* and Solidarity 80 in the last years have ranged from the extreme Right to the Peasants' Party and the Left. The worker movement as link between the factory and society appears as disintegrated, leaving the space to any kind of political heteronomy. Therefore, a 'politics of the Subject' may emerge in the unions from below, from the concrete demands of the workers, more easily than from above, from neat ready-made political and ideological projects.

2.4.2. Seeking 'encompassingness': the forward and backward steps of neocorporatism

In the period of change traversed by Italy and above all Poland, the dilemmas of politicisation are central with respect to two issues: the emerging of neo-corporatist arrangements and the role of the unions in the democratisation process.

The first issue was already discussed in chapter 3, with regard to the enduring feelings of opposition which impede a real 'social partnership'. After the discussion elaborated in this chapter, it may be added that in both countries corporatist solutions, especially if implemented only *from above*, risk being in conflict with the subjectivation process. In particular, there is a risk that the unions' monopoly of representation acted as a brake on the emergence of new demands and new, still underrepresented or marginal, groups. In Italy this risk has been clearly denounced by Bruno Trentin, Cgil leader until 1994.

When it is not the discovery of hot water, political exchange is a formula aiming at legitimising, in an elevated language, corporatist [the term is in Italian negatively connoted] modes of arrangement characterised (...) by a process of exclusion and marginalisation of the unrepresented. (Trentin 1994: 49)

In Poland, the problem has been involuntarily touched by the new Constitution, passed in 1997. Paragraph 59 reads: 'The freedom to *join* trade unions is guaranteed', forgetting the freedom to *constitute* trade unions.³¹ This detail, although without any concrete relevance, betrays the tendency at the political system to consider the trade unions as *given* institutions (as prescribed by corporatist models),

with little attention to change and innovation. In Poland, where the main trade unions Solidarity and OPZZ maintain strong political power, this is all the more evident. Schmitter himself (1981) acknowledges that the corporatist models possibly manifest a certain level of institutional sclerosis and a dubious capacity to answer to new political demands and to emerging identities.

While listening to the Italian and Polish workers even more might be said. Industrial workers have ceased to be central in political exchange, and have become themselves, both subjectively and according to the general social representation, a 'minority' like many others. Subsequently, workers' protest is no longer successfully restrained by neo-corporatism. This hypothesis contests the conclusions of cross-national analysis on political protest, according to which established neo-corporatist arrangements reduce the levels of political protest (e.g. Nollert 1995). In-depth analysis allows us to distinguish between the *expression* of social protest and the subjective orientations of the actors, a distinction avoided by political scientists concentrating on 'macro' cross-national comparisons. It may be easily noted, in this way, that in Italy and Poland the major and maybe unique efforts made by successive governments since 1992 (with the notable exception of Berlusconi in Italy) have not reduced feelings of opposition among workers. Certainly Italy and Poland do not represent the best cases of neo-corporatism implementation and consolidation. If one takes into account the general trends in class power relations, and the nature of the 'laboratories' of Italy and especially Poland in the last years, it may be suggested that these countries are *anticipating* general trends, rather than catching up with them. In conclusion, when the neo-corporatist aim of shaping a more 'encompassing' representation becomes more topical, paradoxically its realisation gets more delicate and problematic.

2.4.3. Unions and democracy: promoters or victims?

Just like theories on corporatism, theories on democratisation may also be assessed by a look 'from below'. The role of workers and trade unions in the process of democratisation had been conceived in very different ways. Classical theories, whether from the Right or from Marxist standpoints, tend to see democracy as the business of the bourgeoisie, or even to see workers as prone to authoritarianism (e.g.

Lipset 1959). More recently, the opposite thesis of the working class as the main promoter of democratisation has been advanced with a rich historical foundation (Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens 1992).

The cases of Italy in 1943-48 and Poland in the '80s quite clearly support the second of these views. Moreover, the experience of direct, council democracy of the *radny robotnicze* in 1956-57 or of the *consigli di fabbrica* in 1968-70 had a meaning that went beyond the factory gates. The democratic orientations of the Polish workers in 1980-81 could not be stressed more than was done by Laba (1991) and Goodwyn (1991).

Yet today an answer to the problem of the relationship between workers, unions, and democracy requires further attention. The fears expressed by Ost (1994) about a non-democratic mobilisation of the suffering Polish working class have been confirmed neither by the interview materials presented here, nor by actual political developments. In other post-communist countries, however, there have been working-class mobilisations *against* democratisation (notably, Yugoslavia 1991 and Romania 1990-91). In Poland, the interviews show, rather than a rejection of democracy (which takes place only in very isolated cases like Ursus), a rapid disenchantment. Workers perceive that democracy, today, does not necessarily serve their interests, as was assumed by Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens. More consistent seems the argument by Galin (1994), according to which the unions *weaken* after democratisation, rather than strengthening as it is usually expected. This is due to the loss of some important resources they have under undemocratic regimes: the unity due to the common enemy, international support, the mobilising myths. The experience of 'alternation' I described is particular strong in these regards.

This is only a part of the truth, however. Disenchantment with democracy is not specific to East Europeans. Western workers today also express increasing dissatisfaction with democracy, as is shown by their substantial support for parties like the *Front National*, the FPÖ, or the *Lega Nord* (and in the US for Pat Buchanan). The Italian union activists interviewed at Fiat, Lucchini and Danone, although far from being anti-democratic, are however very sceptical about the political role of the trade unions.

What was described in the third chapter helps us to understand this situation. Both Italian and Polish trade unions are experiencing a parallel disintegration of working class consciousness. Therefore, the working class cannot any longer be a united political subject; in Touraine's terms, it is no longer a class. As a consequence, problems that were until now marginal in the Italian and Polish union movements, like the representation of minorities, the management of differences, and the international dialogue, require new ways of conceiving political engagement. More 'laic' approaches to democracy are sought, possibly with a participation from the grass roots.

¹ According to a survey of Italian metalworkers, 67.8% identify the union in the shop steward (*delegato*), 12.3% in the full-time officer, 5.7% in the national leader, 3.8% in somebody else (Ires 1995). Though the sample is not representative, the results remain quite telling.

² I refer here to the 'vulgar' version of the classical theory of Milbrath (1965). Accordingly, party membership was rated very high, at the fifth level of a fourteen-level scale, above other indicators of 'sympathising'. In fact, this is true only for its vulgar version available in many textbooks of political science and political sociology, since Milbrath more carefully spoke of 'active party membership', and not of membership *tout court*.

³ The proposal came from the 'Congress of the Liberals' held in Gdańsk in December 1998. The 'Liberals' are active in both parties of the ruling coalition, i.e. the Union of Freedom and Solidarity Electoral Action.

⁴ The transformation of union membership is sometimes extreme. At Ursus there are even cases of 'double membership'. In Italy, in some public companies workers change union several times a year, in a sort of 'membership cards free market'.

⁵ Leader of the left-wing minority of the Cgil until 1994, and since then of *Rifondazione Comunista*, Fausto Bertinotti is considered one of the best Italian politicians for TV performances.

⁶ Left-wing film director. The quotation is from his film 'Aprile'.

⁷ A Pensioners' Party has been active in Poland since 1995 (more than 5% at the 1997 elections if one also counts the votes for a second Pensioners' Party, created for disturbance purposes), but it defends mainly already retired people, who are not concerned with the current reforms. Similar parties also exist in Italy, where in 1999 they gained a seat in the European Parliament.

⁸ 42% of Turin manual workers doing overtime say that it is under unilateral management control (Cerruti and Rieser 1999).

⁹ Altogether, the overtime average in the Tychy plant in 1997 was 108 hours during the year. This figure, however, hides important variations among workshops and positions. To give a term of comparison, at the same time Turin metalworkers put in an average 72 hours of overtime.

¹⁰ The authors themselves acknowledge it: 'The interviewers have been obliged to adopt particular modes of approaching the bi-occupied, in order to overcome the widespread reluctance to discuss the research topic. This may have swelled the number of bi-occupied members of political parties' (Milanaccio 1982: 302).

¹¹ The *contratti di solidarietà*, envisaged by law 863 of 1984, consist in a reduction of working time whose costs are partially covered by the state, which refunds 50% of the working hours lost.

¹² The simple fact that the government has needed six years (from 1993 to 1999) to elaborate the *lavori particolarmente usuranti* list reveals the political delicacy of the issue.

¹³ To give an example (although statistics, as already repeatedly observed, are often misleading in transitional economies), the ratio of wages of general managers to average wages has jumped between 1990 and 1994 from 2.5-3.5 to 2.8-7.5 in public enterprises, 11.3-22.6 in joint ventures, 4.7-11.3 in private enterprises. Even higher are the relative wages of the chiefs of foreign financial institutions: 64-86 times average salaries (Kabaj 1998).

¹⁴ Touraine's research of 1981 evinced for instance the demand of Gdańsk workers (who were the best paid together with those from Warsaw) to extend their economic conditions to all other regions.

¹⁵ Regionally-based bargaining indeed has important potentialities (see e.g. Regalia 1998), and may have different outcomes depending on the specific power relations between employers and unions (for instance in Germany it is the unions who mostly gain from regional bargaining). In any case the regulation of regional differences is everywhere a political problem for the unions, as German reunification has shown. In Eastern Germany, like in Southern Italy, a purely egalitarian policy without more focused developmental programs has failed, attesting the insufficiency of traditional Keynesian approaches for the growth of single regions integrated into wider markets.

¹⁶ This also happened in Poland to other researchers, and contrasts with the Italian situation.

¹⁷ There are however important differences among countries. Women and immigrants were segregated, in a way or in another, everywhere, but with respects to age and skills the European labour movements have been more integrative than the American one.

¹⁸ For explanations of the concept of subjectivity at work, see: Thuderoz (1995), Ollivier (1996), Pirdas (1997). More generally, on the idea of 'Subject' see Chauchat and Durand-Delvigne (1999) and Touraine (1992). Touraine's definition, to which I refer, is the following:

Le seul lieu où puisse s'opérer la combinaison de l'instrumentalité et de l'identité, du technique et du symbolique, est le projet de vie personnel, le désir de chacun que son existence ne se réduise pas à une expérience kaléidoscopique, à un ensemble discontinu de réponses aux stimulations de l'environnement social. (Touraine 1997: 28-29)

¹⁹ The interviews which displayed a strong and explicit affirmation of individual autonomy, and in which the 'I' form was more frequent than the collective or impersonal tenses have been considered as containing subjective attitudes.

²⁰ After all, the historical strike at the Lenin Shipyards in Gdańsk of August 1980 started with the firing of a woman, Anna Walentynowicz, who was among the leaders of the clandestine free trade unions.

²¹ Cerruti and Rieser (1999) also detected – through a large-scale survey – differences between working women with children aged under 12 and other working women. Their analysis concludes however only on the confirmation of an unequal sexual division of child-care work.

²² See, for a particularly clear interpretation in this sense, the recent work by Agacinski (1998) on gender politics.

²³ In 1996 they made three claims in the company-level bargaining forum: the possibility of benefiting from a part of the severance pay (*trattamento di fine rapporto*) for personal leave; the extension of part-time working; interrupted working time like for white-collar workers. None of these claims, however, was conceded, which points to the actual attitudes of employers and unions. A female activist comments: 'the union does not yet believe in these things' [rf7].

²⁴ On this point Poland and Italy are very different. In 1994 28% of the Italian women and 53% of the Polish ones worked full time. The Polish rate, although is the lowest among the European post-communist countries, is higher than any other Western advanced country, included Scandinavia and North America (data: ISSP survey 1994 on 'Family and Changing Gender Role II').

²⁵ The pre-modern or pre-industrial arguments are however valid for the Polish rural society. Polish surveys show the variable 'living in the countryside' to be an extremely strong determinant of people's answers.

²⁶ In this regard the reality of post-communist Europe requires a more refined approach than that of Western gender studies which consider the percentage of dual-earner families as an indicator of gender equality (e.g. González López 1998).

²⁷ Although Bridger and others' study has unfortunately the bias of being concentrated on highly educated women.

²⁸ The observation consisted in the collection of press and union materials, the interview of two Solidarity activists and of the Solidarity '80 leader, an afternoon's presence in the occupied factory, and the conversation with the inhabitants of the area.

²⁹ The exact name of Jurczyk's organisation is 'National Independent Self-Ruling Trade Union Solidarity 80' (*Krajowy Niezależny Samorządny Związek Zawodowy Solidarność 80*), abbreviated

KNSZZ Solidarność 80. Only the 'K' letter at the beginning differentiates it from the bigger organisation *NSZZ Solidarność 80*.

³⁰ In particular, *Sierpień 80* organised in Katowice (where it is strongest) two spectacular initiatives charged with not being democratic. During the electoral campaign of 1997 it walled up the doors of the Union of Freedom's offices. In December 1998 prevented the Solidarity delegation from participating in the commemorations of the bloody repression at the mine 'Wujek' in 1981.

³¹ The corresponding paragraph of the Italian Constitution (n.39) states simply that 'trade unions' organisation is free'.

CONCLUSION

We still know too little about the orientations of the trade unions' rank and file, paradoxically in a period when – as shown in Italy by the increasing number of workplace ballots in which unions' proposals are rejected – the tensions between ordinary members and the leaderships have become more problematic. If one glances through recent volumes of the industrial relations reviews, one will not find many case-studies. There are indeed various forms of surveys, but they are still incapable, thirty years after Parkin's criticism, of discerning between 'dominant' and 'subordinate' systems of references. The problems are even stronger in the post-communist countries, where the actual meaning of the words themselves should be tested beforehand. As David Stark has proved, even a basic institution of capitalism like private property can take, in Eastern Europe, disparate meanings. We will know little or nothing about post-communist workers' preferences as long as we investigate them through abstract questions on 'democracy', 'privatisation', or 'the free market'.

This thesis has given several examples of incoherence between general ('dominant', in Parkin's terms) statements and everyday, individual orientations. Methodologically, the thesis has moved some tentative steps towards a more interpretative approach, of which the theoretical grounds were outlined in the 1st and 2nd chapters. The complex, multifaced reality of workplace industrial relations requires prudence and further testing; moreover, it implies that no approach can have claim an explanatory monopoly. Nevertheless, the approach of this thesis has displayed specific potentialities. The typology of 'plant consciousnesses' described in the 3rd chapter, for instance, although it does not correspond to any classical industrial relations indicator, accounts quite precisely for the most recent trends (decline or recovery) of the unions and their capacity to deal with the emerging issues of 'difference'. Culture and life-experiences do matter, explaining differences within identical companies and between identical plants (like Mirafiori and Rivalta Fiat

plants). In a period when new social movements have often a cultural and identity basis, even in the analysis of an *interest* organisation like the trade unions we have to take into account the cultural and subjective factors. Otherwise it would be difficult to assess issues like nationalism or gender policies in the unions.

The usefulness of an approach should be evaluated first of all on the basis of its capacity to produce 'new' results, additional knowledge on the topic (while it does not require a capacity of substitution of the other approaches). Therefore, in the conclusions, it is necessary to summarise and assess the main findings. In this thesis, they have been organised around three main statements, called with a certain pretension 'hypotheses' and discussed in detail in the 3rd, 4th and 5th chapters.

The first statement argues that in both Italy and Poland, on the two sides of the former iron curtain, a parallel process of 'class consciousness disintegration' is taking place. The social relations of production, the basis of class consciousness, are no longer sufficient to explain trade unionism. The fact that Poles and Italians work for the same employers and in very similar workshops by no means makes them more alike. By contrast, a deep differentiation emerges: at Fiat and Lucchini ten different configurations of union consciousness were counted.

Indeed, working-class heterogeneity is not a novelty, especially in Italy where in social stratification terms an homogeneous, large working class has never existed. Neither is the heterogeneity of working-class *consciousness* a novelty, as Marshall (1983) illustrated at length well before the fall of the states based on a working-class ideology. Nevertheless, an in-depth investigation allows us to go a step further than stating the presence of differences.

Notably, in both countries the same arguments and cognitive frameworks (called 'constants of disintegration') contrasting the current situation with the past have been found. Subjectively, if not objectively, the trade unionists studied indicate a process of social decline, egoistic withdrawal, generation fracture, organisational mistrust, and isolation. They express the same feelings of nostalgia. We cannot assert that the past was 'objectively' as they depict it, but the imagery inherited from that past is the same in both countries. In spite of the 'nominal' opposition in the

ideological tradition (communist vs. anticommunist unionism), in the workplaces the historical evolution has been seen in similar ways. The current differences and divisions, whether horizontal or vertical, are perceived as problematic precisely because they diverge from the image of the past based on unity, strength, and social ascent. Once the 'class' icon has been breached, cultural, gender, professional identities start to be visible.

The second statement refers to the current differences between Italian and Polish workers: they are continuously socially constructed and reconstructed. There are basic distinguishing elements between the two nationalities: notably, the stronger 'monetary' orientations and the distinctive 'neo-proletarian' rhetoric of the Poles. Moreover, in spite of the Soviet bloc's fall and of the European integration process, the East-West distinction maintains a powerful meaning for the workers. We cannot be sure that Italians and Poles respectively represent Western and Eastern workers as a whole. However, the reciprocal difference is perceived by the workers themselves precisely in those terms: we are 'Western' and they are 'Eastern', and vice versa.

More complicated than the assertion of this difference has been its interpretation. The most commonplace explanations, based on the different level of institutionalisation or on standards of living, did not withstand close examination. In particular, the findings contest the idea that the differences between East and West are due to the 'communist legacies' in which are locked Eastern workers. Actually, Polish workers are not more conservative than those in Italy; on the contrary, they have embraced many of the values currently considered as 'modern' (flexibility, innovation, international adaptation, qualification, tertiarisation...) with more conviction. On issues of social change, Polish workers emerge as more 'open' than their Italian counterparts, they are not 'backward'.

Through a 'subjective' approach, an alternative explanation has been suggested giving the central role to the specific experience of regime change. The subjective experience of communist breakdown has been re-defined, drawing on Berger and Luckmann's, 'alternation', abandoning the misleading concept of 'transition'. In essence, 'alternation' has promoted among Polish workers the positive

value of change and the use of monetary evaluative references, but also a 'neo-proletarian' definition of identities. By contrast, the Italian subjective experience of slow change and crisis, defined as 'secondary socialisation', rather pushes the Italian workers towards 'resistance' attitudes. The legacies of the past are more visible in the West than in the East, where – as it is clearly shown by the way itself people talk during the interviews – the experience of alternation induced a higher reflexivity, an important feature of both high modernity (according to Giddens) and new social movements (according to Touraine).

This explanation is developed on the 'micro' level, but directly refers to the 'macro' level and merges with it. The differences between plants required to search for the reason beyond the workplaces. If we cannot extend the conclusions of limited case studies to large national societies, we can understand better national societies if we become familiar with the way society members think about themselves. As a matter of fact, similar arguments against the idea of Polish 'backwardness' may be proposed about Poland as a society. Some observers, like the economist, former Solidarity advisor and politician Ryszard Bugaj (1999), are by now starting to argue that Poland is already more capitalist, and more 'American', than Western Europe. Such a rapid change would not have been possible if the Polish workers had been, as many still argue, conservative opponents of reform. Indeed, it is more frequent to hear Poland defined as 'XIX century capitalism'. However, this definition, forgetting the analogies between XIX and XXI centuries, hides the nature of Central-Eastern Europe (and especially Poland) as a path-finder of the current trend in the West towards a resurgence of capitalism.

The third and last argument is about the ways trade union activists perceive the differences among workers: differences *among* nationalities and differences *within* the workplaces are perceived through a similar lens. They all challenge a community-based form of solidarity and draw attention to individual, subjective demands. As a result, the unions which are most internally differentiated and most open towards these differences are also the most inclined to trans-national dialogue and cooperation.

The interviews with the activists show that this link is not an individual one: there is not, or at least not yet, a type of activist coherently well-disposed towards any kind of minority or different group. At this level the hypothesis is rejected by the research evidence. However, the link exists at the 'micro-social' level of workshop union organisation. The unions which, locally, are used to listening to different people also listen more easily to foreign workers. This happens because both globalization and internal differentiation raise, from different sides, the same problems of identity and solidarity redefinition. Just as it is impossible to satisfy everybody simply by claiming equal wages for workers of different qualifications, different ages, or different genders, it is impossible to solve the dilemmas of globalization by demanding the same wages for Poles and Italians. In both cases an identity based on resemblance, like that inherent to class consciousness, is inadequate.

A more attentive analysis of subjective orientations at work and in the unions reveals, however, that not everything is sterile in the heritage of class consciousness. Rather, that heritage should be accepted 'with reservation' by today's unions. Besides the aspect of similarity and unity, class consciousness had – in Turin as well as in the Polish Solidarity – a 'subjective' side of opposition at work, of 'voice', involving a capacity to express human prerogatives and an autonomous point of view on working life. In certain cases, especially among young and female workers, this side already merges with new, subjective forms of union commitment.

In the process of subjectivation, the Italian unions have some material comparative advantages (money, time, and institutions) which help to add the life-sphere to workplace experience as an evaluative horizon. However, from the point of view of orientations, there are no particular differences: subjectivity was found dominant in about one third of the activists in Poland as well as in Italy. Probably, the orientation to change and the lack of inertia compensates among the Poles for material disadvantage. Which indicates how much different explanatory approaches are today complementary.

These three reflections, suggested and corroborated by extensive interview materials, allow some suggestions for today's trade unions to be made. Although the

thesis has intentionally avoided the systematic analysis of the 'objective' elements of workplace industrial relations, in order to test the autonomous potentialities of an interpretative approach, something can be learnt about the current political – and therefore concrete – dilemmas of trade unions.

First of all, when dealing with Eastern Europe the trade unions should take into account the failure of 'evolutionary' approaches to the understanding of post-communism. Since the new Central and Eastern European democracies, following the drastic 'alternation' of priorities and references, try – not always successfully indeed, but this is a local empirical problem – to embrace the newest and purest patterns of capitalism, the workplace reality is also sometimes more 'advanced' than in the West. So, for instance, Danone is experimenting with plant councils in Poland before introducing them in France; subcontracting, internal mobility, and variable wages are more 'advanced' in the Polish plants than in the Italian ones; company bargaining already substitutes for sector bargaining in Poland while it probably will in Italy in the future. Therefore, the relations between Western and Eastern trade unions should no longer have the strongly 'asymmetric' nature which characterised the exchanges between Cgil-Cisl-Uil (or the French CFDT) and Solidarity in the '80s. Conversely, today the Western unions have much to learn from the Eastern ones.

A second lesson lies in the fact that by coming to terms with Eastern Europe the Western trade unions are forced to review their identities and basic values. Today, it is argued from different ideological positions, the trade unions risk withdrawing into the defence of relative (sometimes very relative) privileges forgetting all the people who do not belong to the 'established' working class. Direct dialogue with Eastern Europe, just like openness to women, immigrants, or atypical workers, will certainly cause delicate dilemmas in the short run, breaching established protective boxes. Nevertheless, through the emergence of 'subjectivity' analysed and defined in some workers' discourses, it is likely to open up new chances in the long run. The unions have to get used to difference, and international difference is quite emblematic and instructive. The development of communication channels and of shop-floor democracy, the elaboration of more operational conceptions of equity, the attention to

vocational courses (at the national level as well as at the individual one) will all contribute to the better equipment of the union movement in the XXI century.

This is not a defence of internationalism. Just the opposite, the in-depth case studies of two Italian and one French multinational companies reveal that ideological internationalism (like rhetorical egalitarianism) is backfiring rather. Moreover, there is no gain on the shop floor from international union contacts, when they only involve officers. Today, the views of Italian and Polish workers about each other are quite negative. What is required, is the creation of 'global' experiences at the *Lebenswelt* level, capable of reducing the gap – created by globalization – between borders of experience (and identities) and borders of interests. Therefore, a tighter link between institutions like the European Work Councils or the European Trade Union Confederation and shop-floor realities is necessary. Concrete exchange of information is an example. It has the immediate advantage of reducing the existing (more or less employer-led) misinformation on foreign realities, and the long-term one of redefining identities.

Otherwise, the reality found in multinational companies points to a high risk that the process of European integration, and of European Union enlargement in particular, will be far from peaceful. The East-West divide in identities, and reciprocal blaming, may quickly become much stronger than the existing divide between Southern and Northern Europe. Social dumping and national stereotypes might then impede any form of 'social Europe'. The divergent nascent trends might end in the construction of two opposed models of unionism, both equally inadequate: resistance unionism (in the West) and neo-proletarian unionism (in the East).

Certainly the current subjective difference between the Eastern Europeans, experiencing 'alternation', and Westerners, experiencing 'crisis', makes things difficult. But these different experiences may be in principle communicated if not shared. The divide might be gradually reduced. So we start to see, in Poland in 1999, a re-emergence of social demands (about health care or pensions) which had been repressed after 1989 following the logic of 'alternation'. That logic – involving a rejection of the old, regime-based, social paternalism, a neo-proletarian rhetoric and a strong orientation towards immediate monetary advantage – promoted a sort of

'primary accumulation'. With the end of this phase, social demands are going to be expressed in significantly different forms than we are used to seeing in the 'advanced' capitalist countries. Possibly, individual prerogatives and aspirations will be taken into account more than they were by the traditional labour movement.

Polish trade union activists – in spite of many limits and many mistakes made during the objective learning process – are neither 'conservative' nor 'nationalist reactionaries', but are often angry about injustice. Since they no longer express this injustice in class terms, they might, if isolated, revert to the East-West category. But, forced by the fact that inequality is more compelling in the East than in the West, they also might develop a deeper conception of equality.

The history of Solidarity, and this is a last lesson from the comparison, shows that the defence of human prerogatives and culture may be a mobilisation resource for trade unions. Solidarity activists were fighting for the defence of the workers against exploitation, but also for the defence of the individual against standardisation. The sociologist Aris Accornero, pointing at the Italian Fiat workers, once commented 'of these men we have made machines for class struggle' (quoted in Lerner 1988: 13). The Polish Fiat workers have been less susceptible to be made class-machines.

ANNEX 1

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INTERVIEWS

| abbr. | union | company | plant | workshop | age | sex | job | function | date | rec |
|-------|-------------|----------|----------|------------|-----|-----|-----------|----------|----------|-----|
| bs1 | Solidarity | Fiat | Bielsko | Assembly | 40 | M | Superv. | member | 19/04/95 | yes |
| bs2 | Solidarity | Fiat | Bielsko | Assembly | 30 | M | Skilled | delegate | 19/04/95 | yes |
| bs3 | Solidarity | Fiat | Bielsko | Toolroom | 35 | M | Skilled | delegate | 20/04/95 | yes |
| bs4 | Solidarity | Fiat | Bielsko | Assembly | 45 | M | Skilled | delegate | 20/04/95 | yes |
| bs5 | Solidarity | Fiat | Bielsko | Assembly | 34 | M | Unskilled | delegate | 20/04/95 | yes |
| bs6 | Solidarity | Fiat | Bielsko | Assembly | 34 | M | Unskilled | member | 20/04/95 | yes |
| bs7 | Solidarity | Fiat | Bielsko | Assembly | 35 | M | Skilled | member | 20/04/95 | yes |
| bs8 | Solidarity | Fiat | Bielsko | Assembly | 40 | M | Skilled | member | 21/04/95 | yes |
| bs9 | Solidarity | Fiat | Bielsko | Offices | 55 | M | Clerk | member | 21/04/95 | no |
| tz1 | Federacja | Fiat | Tychy | Assembly | 40 | M | Unskilled | member | 23/02/98 | yes |
| tz2 | Federacja | Fiat | Tychy | Assembly | 35 | M | Unskilled | member | 23/02/98 | yes |
| tz3 | Federacja | Fiat | Tychy | Assembly | 45 | M | Unskilled | member | 23/02/98 | yes |
| ri1 | Fim | Fiat | Rivatta | Assembly | 34 | M | Unskilled | delegate | 20/05/96 | no |
| ri2 | Fim | Fiat | Rivatta | Assembly | 29 | M | Unskilled | delegate | 20/05/96 | no |
| ri3 | Fim | Fiat | Rivatta | Assembly | 38 | M | Unskilled | delegate | 20/05/96 | no |
| ri4 | Fim | Fiat | Rivatta | Assembly | 32 | M | Unskilled | member | 21/05/96 | yes |
| ri5 | Fim | Fiat | Rivatta | Assembly | 28 | M | Unskilled | delegate | 23/05/96 | yes |
| ri6 | Fim | Fiat | Rivatta | Assembly | 28 | M | Unskilled | delegate | 23/05/96 | yes |
| ri7 | Fim | Fiat | Rivatta | Assembly | 30 | M | Unskilled | member | 24/05/96 | yes |
| ri8 | Fim | Fiat | Rivatta | Assembly | 30 | F | Unskilled | member | 24/05/96 | yes |
| ri9 | Fim | Fiat | Rivatta | Assembly | 30 | M | Unskilled | delegate | 24/05/96 | yes |
| rf1 | Fiom | Fiat | Rivatta | Painting | 47 | M | Superv. | delegate | 22/05/96 | yes |
| rf2 | Fiom | Fiat | Rivatta | Painting | 55 | M | Unskilled | member | 22/05/96 | yes |
| rf3 | Fiom | Fiat | Rivatta | Offices | 48 | M | Clerk | delegate | 22/05/96 | yes |
| rf4 | Fiom | Fiat | Rivatta | Mainten. | 46 | M | Skilled | delegate | 22/05/96 | yes |
| rf5 | Fiom | Fiat | Rivatta | Assembly | 45 | F | Clerk | delegate | 27/05/96 | yes |
| rf6 | Fiom | Fiat | Rivatta | Assembly | 35 | F | Unskilled | delegate | 27/05/96 | yes |
| rf7 | Fiom | Fiat | Rivatta | Welding | 40 | F | Unskilled | delegate | 27/05/96 | no |
| rf8 | Fiom | Fiat | Rivatta | Assembly | 50 | M | Unskilled | delegate | 28/05/96 | no |
| hs1 | Solidarity | Lucchini | Warsaw | Lamination | 35 | M | Unskilled | delegate | 09/09/97 | no |
| hs2 | Solidarity | Lucchini | Warsaw | Lamination | 50 | M | Unskilled | delegate | 09/09/97 | no |
| hs3 | Solidarity | Lucchini | Warsaw | Foundry | 40 | M | Unskilled | delegate | 09/09/97 | no |
| hs4 | Solidarity | Lucchini | Warsaw | Foundry | 40 | M | Unskilled | delegate | 09/09/97 | no |
| hs5 | Solidarity | Lucchini | Warsaw | Mainten. | 35 | M | Skilled | delegate | 09/09/97 | no |
| hs6 | Solidarity | Lucchini | Warsaw | Mainten. | 43 | M | Skilled | delegate | 01/04/98 | yes |
| hs7 | Solidarity | Lucchini | Warsaw | Lamination | 45 | M | Superv. | member | 02/04/98 | no |
| hs8 | Solidarity | Lucchini | Warsaw | Foundry | 40 | M | Unskilled | delegate | 07/04/98 | yes |
| hm1 | Hutnicy | Lucchini | Warsaw | Foundry | 45 | M | Skilled | delegate | 24/08/98 | yes |
| hm2 | Hutnicy | Lucchini | Warsaw | Lamination | 40 | M | Skilled | delegate | 24/08/98 | yes |
| hm3 | Hutnicy | Lucchini | Warsaw | Mainten. | 50 | M | Skilled | delegate | 24/08/98 | yes |
| tm1 | Metalowcy | Fiat | Tychy | Mainten. | 51 | M | Unskilled | member | 12/06/96 | no |
| tm2 | Metalowcy | Fiat | Tychy | Offices | 40 | F | Clerk | delegate | 12/06/96 | no |
| tm3 | Metalowcy | Fiat | Tychy | Quality c. | 38 | F | Skilled | delegate | 12/06/96 | yes |
| pf1 | Fiom | Lucchini | Piombino | Foundry | 52 | M | Skilled | delegate | 03/11/97 | yes |
| pf2 | Fiom | Lucchini | Piombino | Transports | 34 | M | Skilled | delegate | 03/11/97 | yes |
| pf3 | Fiom | Lucchini | Piombino | Foundry | 45 | M | Clerk | delegate | 03/11/97 | yes |
| pf4 | Fiom | Lucchini | Piombino | Lamination | 42 | M | Unskilled | delegate | 04/11/97 | yes |
| pf5 | Fiom | Lucchini | Piombino | Foundry | 23 | M | Unskilled | member | 03/11/97 | yes |
| pf6 | Fiom | Lucchini | Piombino | Lamination | 46 | M | Unskilled | delegate | 03/11/97 | yes |
| pf7 | Fiom | Lucchini | Piombino | Lamination | 40 | M | Unskilled | delegate | 04/11/97 | no |
| pf8 | Fiom | Lucchini | Piombino | Lamination | 47 | M | Unskilled | delegate | 04/11/97 | no |
| pf9 | Fiom | Lucchini | Piombino | Foundry | 47 | M | Unskilled | member | 04/11/97 | yes |
| pf10 | Fiom | Lucchini | Piombino | Lamination | 46 | M | Unskilled | delegate | 04/11/97 | yes |
| pf11 | Fiom | Lucchini | Piombino | Lamination | 45 | M | Unskilled | member | 04/11/97 | yes |
| pf12 | Fiom | Lucchini | Piombino | Foundry | 45 | M | Unskilled | delegate | 05/11/97 | yes |
| pf13 | Fiom | Lucchini | Piombino | Lamination | 22 | M | Unskilled | member | 10/11/97 | yes |
| pf14 | Fiom | Lucchini | Piombino | Foundry | 50 | M | Skilled | member | 10/11/97 | no |
| pf15 | Fiom | Lucchini | Piombino | Transports | 31 | M | Unskilled | member | 11/11/97 | yes |
| tp1 | Popiel. | Fiat | Tychy | Toolroom | 40 | M | Unskilled | delegate | 16/02/98 | no |
| tp2 | Popiel. | Fiat | Tychy | Mainten. | 40 | M | Skilled | delegate | 16/02/98 | no |
| ta1 | Sierpien 80 | Fiat | Tychy | Painting | 40 | M | Skilled | delegate | 12/06/96 | yes |
| ta2 | Sierpien 80 | Fiat | Tychy | Welding | 36 | M | Skilled | member | 12/06/96 | yes |
| ta3 | Sierpien 80 | Fiat | Tychy | Assembly | 33 | M | Unskilled | member | 12/06/98 | yes |

| abbr. | union | company | plant | workshop | age | sex | job | function | date | rec |
|-------|-------------|----------|-----------|----------|-----|-----|-----------|----------|----------|-----|
| ta4 | Sierpien 80 | Fiat | Tychy | Assembly | 35 | F | Unskilled | member | 01/06/96 | yes |
| ta5 | Sierpien 80 | Fiat | Tychy | Assembly | 23 | M | Unskilled | member | 18/06/96 | yes |
| ta6 | Sierpien 80 | Fiat | Tychy | Assembly | 25 | M | Unskilled | symp. | 18/06/96 | yes |
| ta7 | Sierpien 80 | Fiat | Tychy | Assembly | 50 | M | Skilled | member | 19/06/96 | yes |
| ta8 | Sierpien 80 | Fiat | Tychy | Assembly | 42 | M | Skilled | member | 19/06/96 | yes |
| ta9 | Sierpien 80 | Fiat | Tychy | Presses | 35 | M | Unskilled | member | 20/02/98 | yes |
| ta10 | Sierpien 80 | Fiat | Tychy | Welding | 45 | M | Unskilled | member | 20/02/98 | yes |
| ta11 | Sierpien 80 | Fiat | Tychy | Assembly | 40 | M | Unskilled | delegate | 20/02/98 | yes |
| sf1 | Fiom | Siderco | Piombino | Mainten. | 42 | M | Unskilled | delegate | 06/11/97 | yes |
| sf2 | Fiom | Siderco | Piombino | Mainten. | 30 | M | Unskilled | delegate | 06/11/97 | yes |
| si1 | Fim | Siderco | Piombino | Mainten. | 25 | M | Unskilled | delegate | 06/11/97 | yes |
| mf1 | Fiom | Fiat | Mirafiori | Presses | 50 | M | Unskilled | delegate | 05/05/95 | yes |
| mf2 | Fiom | Fiat | Mirafiori | Offices | 48 | M | Clerk | delegate | 05/05/95 | yes |
| mf3 | Fiom | Fiat | Mirafiori | Offices | 45 | M | Skilled | delegate | 05/05/95 | yes |
| mf4 | Fiom | Fiat | Mirafiori | Assembly | 45 | M | Unskilled | delegate | 08/05/95 | yes |
| mf5 | Fiom | Fiat | Mirafiori | Assembly | 38 | M | Unskilled | delegate | 08/05/95 | yes |
| mf6 | Fiom | Fiat | Mirafiori | Engine | 50 | M | Unskilled | delegate | 08/05/95 | yes |
| mf7 | Fiom | Fiat | Mirafiori | Offices | 37 | M | Unskilled | delegate | 08/05/95 | yes |
| mf8 | Fiom | Fiat | Mirafiori | Assembly | 52 | M | Unskilled | delegate | 12/10/98 | yes |
| mf9 | Fiom | Fiat | Mirafiori | Assembly | 44 | F | Unskilled | member | 12/10/98 | yes |
| ru1 | Uilm | Fiat | Rivaltà | Assembly | 35 | M | Unskilled | delegate | 29/05/96 | no |
| mc1 | Sin Cobas | Fiat | Mirafiori | Presses | 28 | M | Unskilled | member | 27/05/98 | yes |
| mc2 | Sin Cobas | Fiat | Mirafiori | Assembly | 57 | M | Unskilled | delegate | 27/05/98 | yes |
| mc3 | Sin Cobas | Fiat | Mirafiori | Assembly | 35 | M | Unskilled | member | 27/05/98 | yes |
| mc4 | Sin Cobas | Fiat | Mirafiori | Mainten. | 30 | M | Unskilled | member | 27/05/98 | yes |
| mc5 | Sin Cobas | Fiat | Mirafiori | Welding | 31 | M | Unskilled | delegate | 12/10/98 | yes |
| mc6 | Sin Cobas | Fiat | Mirafiori | Assembly | 34 | F | Unskilled | delegate | 12/10/98 | yes |
| pc1 | Slai Cobas | Lucchini | Piombino | Welding | 45 | M | Unskilled | delegate | 05/06/98 | yes |

Note

Recording was avoided when the interviewees expressed restraint or rejection. In addition in a couple of cases recording was impossible for technical reasons. In all these cases extensive and detailed notes have been taken.

The average length of the interviews was around one hour.

ANNEX 2

EXAMPLES OF INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Below are presented two interview transcripts – one from Italy and one from Poland – in order to illustrate the interview and the coding techniques. The transcripts have an exclusively illustrative function and are in no way representative in their content. They are given in the original language because all the analysis has been carried out on the original texts and any even professional translation would have implied some risks of distortion. The coding process was progressive, but only the final codes are reported, referring to the categories employed in the tables and in the text of chapter 3, 4 and 5 (although not all codes employed in the transcripts have been eventually explicitly employed in the text).

Abbreviations and symbols:

ID: identity (as a consciousness principle)
OPP: opposition (as a consciousness principle)
TOT: totality (as a consciousness principle)
TUCom: trade union commitment (sources of)
corp: corporatist withdrawing (as a disintegration constant)
gen: generation break (as a disintegration constant)
isol: isolation (as a disintegration constant)
nost: nostalgia (as a disintegration constant)
org: organisation (as a disintegration constant)

+ positive reference
- negative reference
strikethrough text: explicit negation

Piombino Fiom 15 (pf15) **11.11.97**

Plant: Lucchini Siderurgica Piombino
Trade union: Fiom
Function in the union: none (delegate in the past)
Age: 31
Workshop: internal transports
Job: coupling

Place of the interview: local union office

Transcript

Codes

Io sono entrato nel giugno 1987, a venti anni, avevo da poco finito il militare, il gruppo con cui sono entrato io sono state le ultime assunzioni a CFL per due anni. Diciamo che l'impatto con la fabbrica è stato un impatto duro per chi era abituato a lavorare fuori dalla fabbrica, prima facevo il carrozziere, e l'impressione quando entri in fabbrica è di un ambiente così vasto che tanti Piombinesi secondo me non è

che conoscono la fabbrica, chi non ci ha lavorato non conosce neanche le dimensioni, quindi questo impatto abbastanza...

Ho lavorato per 3-4 giorni al CRI dove ci mandavano un po' per tutto lo stabilimento, era un centro rimpiazzi, poi mi hanno mandato a fare l'agganciatore, è un lavoro di spostamento dei carri ferroviari all'interno dello stabilimento sia di spedizione per le FS o di caricamento via mare su navi per lo spostamento di materiali. Tuttora continuo a fare l'agganciatore. Sicuramente da quando sono entrato io sia i ritmi di lavoro che i metodi erano molto diversi da ora.

Eravamo l'Ilva, a PPSS, nel nostro reparto per farti un esempio delle ristrutturazioni di questi anni eravamo 280, attualmente siamo 61, quindi l'idea delle ristrutturazioni alcune giuste alcune meno giuste che abbiamo subito dall'86 che sembra un'eternità invece sono 10 anni, 11.

Quello che ha segnato in modo particolare questo periodo sono stati gli scioperi del 93. Gli scioperi del 93 hanno proprio dato un'inversione di tendenza tremenda, facendo uscire più di 1000 lavoratori, è stata una battaglia sindacale che ha visto i lavoratori impegnati per 38 giorni in questa lunga vertenza, purtroppo finita se da una parte abbastanza bene perché con i prepensionamenti e la cassa integrazione abbiamo potuto ricollocare il personale eccedente però dal punto di vista occupazionale ha creato una falla enorme, 1000 posti di lavoro non è che si ricreano così, si parla di non so quanti miliardi per creare un posto di lavoro soltanto, quindi 1100 posti di lavoro quanti miliardi ci vorranno, tantissimi anni. Questo fa anche sì che la disoccupazione a Piombino ha raggiunto livelli preoccupanti.

TOT: employment

Io come esperienza sindacale ho fatto il delegato per tre anni, subito dopo gli scioperi perché ho sentito sulla pelle proprio questo vuoto che si era venuto a creare tra sindacato e lavoratori dopo 39 giorni di sciopero come tutti fui scottato da questa esperienza, c'era da ricreare questo feeling tra sindacato e lavoratori dopo questi 38 giorni, ho sentito proprio il dovere di impegnarmi nel sindacato per dare il mio contributo a questa cosa, non so, sicuramente sono stati tre anni come esperienza sindacale che sono stati belli anche per crescita mia, nel creare rapporti con la gente, nel conoscere le cose, quindi sono stati un'esperienza positiva al massimo, anche legata al riconoscimento che i lavoratori mi hanno dato.

TUCom: subjectivity

Effettivamente è stata un'esperienza difficile perché l'azienda in alcuni momenti è stata molto rigida, praticamente va come l'andamento del mercato, se il mercato tira è un'azienda più lascitiva, se non tira si chiude in se stessa e non dà modo al sindacato di avere quel ruolo che gli compete.

OPP: generic

Ho deciso di lasciare il sindacato perché ho intrapreso una nuova esperienza politica, sono segretario di una sezione tematica del PDS, quindi ho lasciato il sindacato per intraprendere una strada nuova che mi dia degli stimoli, se no sicuramente avrei continuato a dare il contributo, che sto continuando a dare nel comitato degli iscritti al sindacato, anche nei luoghi di lavoro, tenendo i rapporti con la gente. Se no avrei continuato certamente a fare il delegato, se i lavoratori mi avessero votato ovviamente.

ID: political

Prima del 93 che rapporto c'era col sindacato?

Era un rapporto un po' conflittuale sinceramente, perché sicuramente venire da un'esperienza di lavoro fuori e trovarsi in un'impresa a ppss, con tutti i pregi che aveva ma coi milioni di difetti che teneva, certamente faceva anche perdere al sindacato il ruolo che gli compete.

Privatisation +
OPP-past

Io poi ti parlo di sindacato e ho di fronte i delegati che avevo allora di reparto, non il sindacato in assoluto, molto dipende anche da chi ti rappresenta, dalle capacità di chi fa le vertenze in fabbrica. E ci sono stati dei vuoti che mollavo e riprendevo la tessera, sempre la solita perché io sono un forte sostenitore che il sindacato ci deve essere un'idea particolare, che sia Fiom che sia Uil che sia Cisl se dovessi lasciare la tessera non ne prenderei mai un'altra, riprenderei sempre se le cose si fossero chiarite, quella della Fiom.

Infatti quando lasciai la tessera ci furono persone degli altri sindacati che si fecero avanti perché mi convincessi a prendere la loro, questa è una cosa che non sopporto, però esiste, in molti fattori, nel cercare il posto di lavoro, probabilmente molte persone cercano la tessera, oggi con la fame di lavoro non solo per l'ideale di lavoro ma anche perché ti trovino il posto di lavoro. Org

Questo prima del 93 o ora?

Penso che ora succeda in maniera molto più massiccia di prima, con la fame di lavoro che c'è, e questo anche se è utopia sarebbe bello un domani non trovare più, anche se mi rendo conto che è una cosa difficile. Poi dopo il 93 quando arrivi a conoscenza dei diritti e dei doveri e te li senti sulla pelle hai un modo di vedere completamente diverso da come lo immaginavi prima, quindi ho anche cominciato a avere la responsabilità sulle spalle, cercare di risolvere i problemi, allora il rapporto col sindacato si lega molto di più a come era prima.

Adesso stiamo vivendo una fase che ritorna difficile come era nel 93. Questo ci deve anche insegnare come dovremo affrontare questa situazione difficile, perché 600 esuberanti, che siano 400 che la Lucchini sta presentando, arriva una mazzata per l'economia della Val di Cornea che è bestiale, allora dobbiamo rimetterci lì a rileggere i libri della storia recente per cercare di capire e non cadere negli errori che abbiamo fatto allora.

Interessante. Concretamente questo fatto che prima del 93 il sindacato perdeva un po' il proprio ruolo in cosa consisteva?

I problemi erano diversi, cioè non c'era quando sono entrato io il problema dell'occupazione, c'era tanta gente là dentro che il problema era dare i livelli al personale, a quel tempo c'erano i sesti livelli, oppure di mantenere ognuno le poche mansioni che aveva, non c'era mobilità. Il lavoratore andava a piccoli passi, più di lì non poteva andare, c'era un altro che subentrava. Il lavoratore era occupato pochissimo sul posto di lavoro, per chi viene da una realtà, facevo il carrozziere prima, si lavorava quasi 8 ore su 8, entrare là dentro era una cosa che ti sconcertava sotto certi punti di vista, e vedere il sindacato che, d'altra parte era con i lavoratori ma poi si è verificato tutti insieme che quella linea era sbagliata, gli esuberanti del 93, quando le cose sono indifendibili secondo me non vanno difese, bisogna guardare oltre il giorno dopo, bisogna guardare più a lungo termine. Sicuramente ai lavoratori stava bene così, sotto sotto anche a me però vedevo che erano cose sbagliate. Il ruolo del sindacato è quello di difendere il lavoratore dal punto di vista della sicurezza sul lavoro, dei diritti sindacali principali, non difendere l'indifendibile, a quel tempo succedeva anche di difendere cose indifendibili. Per farti un esempio nel mio reparto si rischiò di fermare lo stabilimento perché ci rifiutavamo di pigiare un bottone che apriva dei silos che svuotavano il contenuto in recipienti che trasportavamo col locomotore, c'era una persona che pigiava questi bottoni e basta. L'azienda propose che fu lo stesso agganciatore che dovesse stare lì come mansione a pigiare il bottone, si rischiò di fermare la fabbrica, è una cosa quasi vergognosa da un certo punto di vista, per fare un esempio concreto delle cose che mi hanno segnato, io ero in un angolo non mi sarei, anche perché c'erano i vecchi che non ti lasciavano parlare, tiravano su la voce su certe cose, poi si era tanti, si era in assemblea più di cento, ora se siamo tanti siamo venti tra quello che... un clima tutto diverso da quello di allora, sembra passata una vita ma son sempre 10 anni.

OPP-past work
ID weak
Gen
Nost

Questa cosa di entrare nel sindacato nel 93 è anche interessante, penso che sia una decisione più difficile piuttosto che prima, magari la gente aveva paura...

Io bisogna che sia convinto quando faccio una cosa e in quell'epoca lì, e lo rifarei mille volte, ero convinto che un problema del sindacato sia stato quello di far

crescere i quadri, intendo i lavoratori giovani non solo di età, anche di esperienza, di pensiero, giovani come proposte, in modo che i lavoratori quando vanno a scegliere il loro rappresentante abbiano una scelta vasta su cui scegliere.

Io essendo una persona che non aveva tanta esperienza ho sentito questo bisogno, poi mi sono presentato ma non ero certo che mi avrebbero votato, ho fatto proprio una decisione che nessuno mi ha cercato, mi sono proposto, i lavoratori, qualcuno ha detto "vai te", io sono andato anche se nei primi periodi avevo un capo reparto abbastanza rigido sulle sue posizioni, anche perché gli avevano parlato di me come di una persona che essendo stata nello sciopero uno dei più attivi anche se non avevo la lettera di cassa integrazione, forse anche per quello, per rispetto verso chi la lettera ce l'aveva, ero molto più presente di molta altra gente davanti alle portinerie quasi tutti i giorni.

Sicuramente per quello che gli avevano detto con me aveva quasi un rapporto molto titubante nei miei confronti, poi magari nel conoscermi abbiamo avuto anche nelle nostre diversità, nei nostri confronti ma sempre il rispetto è quello che ci deve essere nei ruoli, questa è una cosa che trovo, il vecchio capo ora non c'è più dice se non avevi un capo reparto stronzo, perché mi dice così, non avresti dato quello che hai dato ai lavoratori, questa è la metafora che usa lui per dire che era un caporeparto troppo cattivo.

TUCom: subjectivity

Su questa differenza nel lavorare, in carrozzeria avevi una qualifica particolare?

No, diciamo facevo dal lattoniere fino al verniciatore, sono entrato al lavoro giovanissimo poi lavoravo, davo un colpo a mio cugino che mi ha insegnato tutto quello che c'era da fare.

Invece l'organizzazione del lavoro in fabbrica, a parte il fatto degli sprechi...

Era una concezione, il profitto era una cosa che non interessava nessuno quindi, interessava l'occupazione, vedevi persone che avevano mansioni che praticamente non valevano un dito, non poteva durare questa cosa, poi si è visto.

Modernisation +

Dal punto di vista del lavoratore c'è possibilità di sviluppo professionale, in carrozzeria immagino uno impara un sacco di cose...

In carrozzeria sì, in fabbrica le logiche che andavano avanti erano diverse, le colpe del sindacato sono anche queste.

Dopo il 93 è peggiorato o migliorato dal punto di vista della possibilità di sviluppo professionale?

Non è migliorata più di tanto, anche se il sindacato ha meno colpe di allora, prima avevi i sesti livelli agli agganciatori e c'erano tanti livelli che erano diciamo sindacalizzati, parliamo così. Poi praticamente queste cose le ritrovi ora, perché sono stati dati in modo proprio confusionato, magari a quello che era più conosciuto, si può dire anche la parola raccomandato, non dico uno scandalo, non credo di poter essere smentito da questo punto di vista. Adesso diciamo il sindacato ha meno le mani in pasta sicuramente di prima quindi se anche l'azienda non è che sta dando delle soddisfazioni a chi le merita, anzi, sicuramente no, continua la pratica, prima la faceva il sindacato ora la continua a praticare l'azienda. Chi è più visto, chi è più raccomandato va avanti, secondo me, questo è un grave errore che sta facendo l'azienda e sicuramente se lo ritroverà più avanti, tante scelte sbagliate fatte in questa logica qui le ha già pagate, e tante ne continuerà a pagare in futuro, sicuramente.

Past=present

Sul 93 quando dici che il sindacato deve imparare da quello pensi che il sindacato nel modo di gestire quella ristrutturazione abbia fatto degli errori?

Sì, penso ne abbia fatti diversi. Sicuramente il primo è non aver capito che in un modo o nell'altro la trattativa andava chiusa nel più breve tempo possibile, c'erano state le condizioni quando siamo andati a Livorno in prefettura la prima volta, mi pare dopo sei-sette giorni, di poter firmare un accordo sicuramente migliore di quello che poi abbiamo firmato dopo 38 giorni di sciopero. Era doveroso sicuramente fermare lo stabilimento perché furono mandate le lettere di cig in modo unilaterale, mi ricordo sempre era una domenica sera, dallo Speedy, il ragazzo che porta le lettere porta a porta a Piombino, era doveroso da parte del sindacato fermare lo stabilimento, non credo ci potesse essere... sarebbe bello aver potuto pensare altre forme di lotta a stabilimento in funzione, sicuramente avrebbero prodotto di più ma come immagine sarebbe stata difficile a spiegare molto probabilmente a chi aveva ricevuto le lettere.

Capisco a fermata dello stabilimento, credo che bisognava avere più coraggio e dire le cose come stavano, cosa che magari è andata, io lo metto in buona fede non penso mai che ci sia, mi piace non pensare che ci sia male fede in qualcuno quindi io ho buona fede, però i risultati poi parlano chiaro, abbiamo firmato dopo 38 gg di sciopero dopo un intervento di Cofferati che se ora reputo una persona molto valida con la nostra esperienza non è che abbia portato dei fatti positivi, poteva intervenire prima perché quando è intervenuto qui praticamente ha voluto chiudere la vertenza per forze,

io dico se la vertenza fosse stata continuata non dico che saremmo potuti riuscire a ottenere molto di più però magari avremmo fatto delle domande diverse, cioè se valeva la pena continuare a tenere la fabbrica a Piombino ad esempio, che a tanti sembra una cosa fuori dal mondo ma che secondo me invece alla luce anche degli ultimi elementi che stanno avvenendo è una domanda che dobbiamo farci. Non è più quella potenzialità di lavoro che era prima, neppure il territorio è lo stesso, ogni 2-3 anni sono convinto che da qui in seguito sarà lo stesso, subiamo delle ristrutturazioni bestiali, le tecnologie vengono avanti quindi è una cosa impensabile che smettano di fare queste ristrutturazioni. Quindi sono domande che il 93 poteva essere l'anno di una scelta coraggiosa, invece non è venuto.

Per questo dico che è stato un fattore positivo perché gli esuberanti in un modo o nell'altro sono rientrati in fabbrica, abbiamo fatto la riduzione dell'orario di lavoro in solidarietà, la rotazione della cassa integrazione, ci son stati i prepensionamenti, è stato positivo da un punto di vista anche se la gente ha sofferto perché 38 giorni senza stipendio sono tanti, anche se in quel periodo mi ha colpito in particolar modo la solidarietà degli altri lavoratori delle fabbriche toscane e non che facevano le raccolte per dare una mano concreta con delle donazioni, era una cosa che mi ha stimolato molto la solidarietà che hanno dimostrato tanti lavoratori, ora non ricordo bene, da Livorno...

Pensi che fosse possibile un'altra scelta?

Ho seguito molto quello che ha fatto Bassolino a Napoli, con tutte le cautele perché naturalmente Napoli ha più potenzialità della Val di Cornea, la Val di Cornea sta cercando in modo maniacale una diversificazione sul mondo del lavoro che va dal turismo, dalla nautica, dall'allargamento delle attività portuali, quindi potenzialità nel suo insieme la Val di Cornea le ha. Quindi la scelta coraggiosa voleva dire seguire un po' il modello che ha fatto Bassolino a Napoli, magari con calma con la dovuta tranquillità, ma l'unica cosa che può far paura a Lucchini anche sul fronte della vertenza sindacale è che non si abbia più bisogno di lui, questa anche se lui lo nega è l'unica cosa che gli può far paura, perché secondo me non è vero che può andar via oggi, non subire niente, non è vero, deve avere un'amministrazione comunale, i partiti politici, il sindacato che gli dicono guarda noi abbiamo pronto questo progetto, o tu ti comporti in modo da ridividere sul territorio il tuo guadagno o te ne vai, secondo me è l'unica arma che abbiamo per contrastare la politica che sta facendo a Piombino Lucchini.

Industry -
Modernisation +

TO: political
OP: generic
Work: extra-work

C'è questo sentore che dicono anche i quadri, i dirigenti che se va via la Lucchini moriamo di fame, mi garberebbe provargli che se vanno via mangiamo uguale. Questa è la scelta coraggiosa che vedo io, Bassolino a Napoli ha avuto certamente tanto coraggio ma anche risultati che sono davanti agli occhi di tutti, è andato anche in America a prendere i soldi quindi aveva ben chiaro quello che aveva intenzione di fare e quello che sta riuscendo a fare.

Il 93 poteva aprire una riflessione grande su questo tema che poi la soluzione della vertenza ha proprio pensato ad altre cose, e anche sul discorso dei rientri in fabbrica il sindacato secondo me ha fatto degli errori, capibili eh, poi si parla col senno del poi e sembra di fare i maestri, iudico le cose che penso ma non perché se ci fossi stato io avrei fatto di meglio, sicuramente sarei incappato negli stessi errori, però analizzando dei dati reali uno ha un'idea di quello che è successo. Far rientrare della gente in posti... ad esempio han fatto rientrare gente a fare gli aggancini che era alta 1,80, invece ai cancelli devi essere di statura medio-bassa, praticamente c'era questa cosa di fare rientrare la gente in qualsiasi posto di lavoro e l'azienda su questo un po' ha giocato e ora c'è la mobilità, non c'è più le caratteristiche fisiche per ricoprire un posto di lavoro, questo lo paghiamo grazie a quegli anni lì.

E questa scelta ora di occuparti più di politica è collegata a questo fatto?

No, è un bisogno di stimoli per cercare di fare bene a una cosa, quindi ho dovuto, io ho sempre bisogno di cambiare, non sto più di tanto periodo in un posto solo, questa è una caratteristica che c'ho io.

Di cosa ti occupi, è un gruppo tematico?

Sì, è la sezione lavoro, prima si chiamava sezione industria e io la prima cosa che ho fatto al congresso le ho cambiato il nome, sezione lavoro. Praticamente era una sezione legata esclusivamente all'industria, poi con le cose che ho detto la prima cosa che ho fatto al congresso è stata cambiare il nome cercando di allargare il più possibile al mondo del lavoro, ai problemi, coerente con la mia linea.

Quindi è collegato un po'...

Sì, una volta che ho scelto di fare politica, ho dato la mia impronta su questa cosa, che guarda al di là della fabbrica ma prende un vasto raggio del mondo del lavoro. Sto cercando, è da otto mesi perché ci vuole tempo, son cose difficili da...

E' più una scelta così, personale, di quello che uno vuole fare, o pensi che davvero per migliorare la posizione oggi più che l'attività sindacale in fabbrica serva un intervento politico?

Sono due cose completamente diverse, servono entrambe, l'attività sindacale... sono difficili entrambe, l'attività sindacale è un'attività che dai se senti dentro, se senti... in tutte e due devi credere, l'attività sindacale essendo quella che ti porta a problemi concreti davanti, in fabbrica, quando c'è un infortunio, io ho vissuto anche un'esperienza terribile, un mio compagno di lavoro è morto sul posto di lavoro, sono cose queste che ti segnano in modo particolare anche nel proseguio di fare sindacato dopo, praticamente quando ti succede questo metti da parte tutte le altre cose e ti butti a corpo morto su quelli che sono i problemi della sicurezza, gli altri non sono più problemi, quelli del livello, de... Purtroppo c'è una cultura in fabbrica che non è rispettosa di questo problema secondo me, è un fatto su cui il sindacato deve lavorare e deve lavorare in fretta perché la sicurezza, morire sul posto di lavoro per me, saranno brutte tutte ma quella lì è la più bestiale, avendola vissuta credo di poterlo dire con forza questa cosa. Temo anche qui che stiamo vivendo ora con l'elezione del delegato alla sicurezza, è anche vero che c'è un po'

di titubanza sul modo di eleggere il delegato, io su questo avrei speso meno tempo, è stata fermata l'elezione per motivi tecnici, e i lavoratori in fabbrica stanno continuando senza il delegato alla sicurezza, che è una figura legata alla legge 626 che è una figura secondo me dalle potenzialità immense per le proprie autonomie e per quello che può dare al lavoratore. Però ci vuole il rappresentante che lavori e ci vuole un rappresentante, cosa che da sei mesi non abbiamo.

Ci sono le elezioni adesso se non mi sbaglio.

Sono state fermate la scorsa settimana per dei discorsi tecnici, sulle liste, non ho ben capito quale fosse il problema, ma sta di fatto che da sei mesi, e questa è una cosa che gli ho rimarcato più volte, di accelerare questa pratica perché reputo che questa figura sia una figura importante. Poi sicuramente ci sarà quello che fa diversamente però è una cosa critica da parte mia.

Tra le altre cose ero delegato nel periodo quando ci fu l'incidente mortale del mio compagno di lavoro, quindi fu una doppia mazzata, quindi ho fatto ricorsi, ho seguito i rilievi della Sanitas, che sarebbe il gruppo medico che faceva i rilievi per quanto riguarda le polveri e la rumorosità all'interno della fabbrica, ho fatto diverse cose, poi andavamo in giro per lo stabilimento a guardare le cose che non andavano, poi ho abbandonato sempre per il discorso legato sempre alla politica, però è stata anche questa un'esperienza. Per questo dico che è una figura importante, perché se uno ha l'entusiasmo per imparare le cose e per farle quella è una figura che gliene dà il mandato, il mandato di farle, ha delle garanzie, dei criteri, quindi è una figura importante.

Oltre a questa questione della sicurezza, quali sono i problemi all'ordine del giorno di cui si deve occupare il sindacato?

Dobbiamo capire che dal '93 ad oggi abbiamo deciso una cosa, che nello stabilimento dobbiamo lavorare 7 ore e 30 su 8, questo vorrebbe dire poi di pari passo richiedere tutte quelle cose che diciamo lo Statuto dei lavoratori, il contratto ci concede, invece da questo dobbiamo partire, dobbiamo concedere all'azienda tutto quello che è suo diritto ottenere, per poi fare la stessa cosa, non possiamo essere prigionieri delle vecchie logiche di fare il bagno mezz'ora prima o attaccare al lavoro dieci minuti dopo o andare a mangiare alla mensa facendo le tavolate come si faceva una volta, queste son cose che non ci possiamo più permettere. Il sindacato deve avere il coraggio di dire la verità ai lavoratori perché anche se i lavoratori si arrabbiano, è l'unica strada percorribile per avere un sindacato credibile. Questo sindacato qui ora come è adesso non ha punti da... anzi è lodevole sotto tutti i punti di vista, per il comportamento che ha avuto sia nella vertenza Magona, sull'autoregolamentazione degli scioperi, intraprendendo una battaglia di principio che io condivido nel modo più assoluto, sia per il comportamento con la Lucchini dalla parte delle acciaierie perché gli ha detto di confrontarsi sui problemi, sulla ristrutturazione, per capire se la ristrutturazione che sta avvenendo adesso è su una riduzione dei coefficienti che sarebbe diciamo improponibile, oppure su investimenti tecnologici che se in un posto di lavoro dove ci sono 4 persone fanno un investimento tecnologico che ce ne vanno 2, non credo che il sindacato o chicchessia abbia la possibilità di controbattere questa politica. Sicuramente la Lucchini essendo un grande polo industriale non si può permettere di non pensare a una rinnovazione del personale, aveva promesso degli investimenti, penso che altri ne potrebbe fare, è due anni penso che c'è questo progetto di fare un'altra trafileria, questa trafileria sembra dover partire a giugno dell'altro anno, però sempre sembra, era due anni che doveva essere costruita e due anni ancora non se ne sa niente. Oppure pensare anche ad altro tipo di investimenti, questa è la politica che il sindacato fa e deve fare. Sicuramente capire da dove vengono questi esuberi, quella è una cosa importantissima, controllare, man mano che si presentano i problemi di verificarli all'interno dello stabilimento sul piano del lavoro,

sicuramente non politicamente, sarebbe un errore secondo me. Sul piano del lavoro, se c'è la possibilità di tenere 3 persone se ne tiene 3, se ci sono dei problemi ti organizzi per metterne 4, o tre e mezzo, come vogliono loro. I segnali che vengono sono tutti indirizzati in questo tipo di logica qui, quindi non è che mi preoccupa oppure non condivido la linea sindacale, io vado a credere che la linea tracciata sia questa.

Altre questione che preoccupano, all'interno della fabbrica?

La sicurezza è un pallino mio che non è sentito secondo me dai lavoratori, tante volte mi dicono "mi mandi a fare il bagno alle dieci, ma lo vedi in che condizioni si lavora?", come se la sicurezza fosse una merce di scambio, invece assolutamente no. Io ho fatto assemblee dove ho detto ai lavoratori "chiediamo di lavorare fino alle 10 all'azienda" fermamente convinto che dal momento che poi io do tutto quello che compete all'azienda l'azienda a costo di fermare il reparto deve fare altrettanto, è così con la moralità secondo me che fermi... con il segno della ragione fermi stanziati del genere, io l'ho provato come piccolo lavoratore nel mio reparto e vedo che funziona.

Oggi c'è in fabbrica un clima come nel 93, quindi è una cosa che, i lavoratori sono molto preoccupati da questa ristrutturazione, quindi c'è questo clima nevrotico fra la gente, che speravamo superato anche perché non è che c'è stato delle avvisaglie prima, siamo passati da giugno dove l'azienda assumeva al 31 luglio che il dottor Nardi ha annunciato 600 esuberanti, quindi c'è stato proprio un momento di sconcerto da parte di tutti, una sorpresa, i segnali che venivano erano tutt'altra cosa, quindi anche noi, sinceramente anch'io quando parlavo alla gente davo messaggi di speranza per quanto riguarda il futuro dell'azienda perché c'era stato fra il 96 e il 97 quasi 400 assunzioni, era abbastanza un numero corposo di persone, e trovarti ora a discutere un'altra ristrutturazione è una mazzata che francamente la gente... e questo sicuramente ha contribuito a questa nevrosi che c'è in fabbrica di chi saranno gli esuberanti, sarai te, sarò io, saranno loro, questo è un clima brutto, poi ti fa anche dare, passare sopra la sicurezza, passare sopra tante cose. Questo è il clima che non avremmo voluto ritrovare invece... Il mio discorso riferito al coraggio dell'azienda lo dico anche perché credo che d'ora in poi finché l'azienda non morirà ci sarà a scadenza regolare ogni 2 anni, 4, una ristrutturazione. Credo che sia quasi innegabile questo, quindi è quello che mi preoccupa al di là dell'oggi, non mi dover trovare fra 10 anni con le bandierine in piazza a gridare "riapriteci la fabbrica, perché l'avete chiusa?" oppure c'è rimasto al lavoro 800 persone. Eppure è una cosa che dobbiamo prendere in considerazione prima o poi questa cosa. Per me non sta vivendo una coscienza di questo che va in questa logica se la gente non è più disposta a subire l'inquinamento come una volta, c'è stata 20 giorni fa una manifestazione che ha avuto una buona partecipazione di persone, legate in particolar modo all'inquinamento che ha rimesso in luce i gravi problemi che ufficialmente le acciaierie ha, la cokeria poi è un impianto fuori legge, i carbonili sono a cielo scoperto senza protezione, quando c'è vento spazzano tutta Piombino, c'è una discarica che anche quella è abusiva, dietro la discarica nuova che abbiamo fatto all'uscita da Piombino, dove gli scarichi, i materiali di scarto dell'altoforno vengono scaricati là anche quelli a cielo sereno senza protezione creando un danno ambientale che è bestiale, quindi l'idea per recuperare questo materiale sarebbe quella di fare velocemente riaprire potrebbe essere un'idea anche quella, sono sempre idee che abbiamo noi perché a noi sta a cuore il territorio però anche quello credo che non gliene freggi niente a Lucchini, questo l'ha dimostrato ampiamente. Coltivare questa coscienza tra i giovani, che va al di là della fabbrica e essere preparati al momento che la fabbrica non sarà, per la grandezza che ha, non sarà più economicamente determinante per la zona, essere pronti a prendere l'atto coraggioso che secondo me era possibile prendere nel 93 e magari sarà possibile nel 2003, meglio tardi che mai.

Work: subjectivity

Tu sei di Piombino?

Sì.

E Piombino come vive questa cosa?

Piombino è una città di pensionati, perché...

Si vede un po', in Corso Italia...

Sì, basta fare un giro un pochino per renderti conto che è difficile avere una politica coraggiosa a Piombino e quant'è difficile più che altro farla capire. C'è delle discussioni, delle critiche all'amministrazione comunale che si può anche essere d'accordo però poi dobbiamo tenere conto anche di chi vive a Piombino, c'è una forte fuga di giovani diplomati da Piombino verso fuori e questa è una cosa che la gente vuole fermare. Com'è vissuta? E' vissuta come può essere vissuta da un pensionato che ha sempre vissuto la fabbrica come se fosse la cosa che portava il pane a Piombino, viene vissuta... ma scherzi, se vai a fare un giro, prendi il microfono e fai le domande alla gente "secondo te la fabbrica va chiusa?" su 1000 persone troverai il giovane che non ha lavoro e dirà "non me ne frega niente tanto senza lavoro sono e senza lavoro rimango" e poi il gruppo storico di persone che ti prenderà come matto, Piombino vive questa cosa qui.

ID-community
Industry -
Gen

Poi c'è una coscienza sempre più crescente di persone come me che vive questa cosa come un fatto per vita a Piombino, per non continuare a essere una città di pensionati, formare i giovani che si diplomano, per fare vivere quello che era Piombino, 10-20 anni fa. Stanno abbassando sempre di più il numero dei residenti, quindi sono tutti problemi questi che vanno affrontati, prima o poi, vanno affrontati quando si è in tempo, questo è il fatto, quando abbiamo il margine per poter chiacchierare tranquillamente senza avere il peso di qualche decisione che poi ti vincola nel prendere le decisioni. Essere tranquilli, avere un confronto sereno, senza avere macigni legati agli esuberanti... Abbiamo il vizio che quando le cose vanno bene, vanno bene stiamo tutti zitti che se anche arriva qualcosa, invece sono quelli secondo me i periodi quando dobbiamo affrontare davvero una linea se succedesse qualcosa. Quei periodi lì sono invece periodi che anche per le grandi fatiche che subiamo quando si fanno certe discussioni, però si dovrebbe sfruttare di più quei momenti lì di non belligeranza per cercare di strappare qualcosa in più, invece a volte ci siamo accontentati.

Altre questioni sindacali importanti, il clima sindacale come lo vedi?

A livello generale, sindacale nazionale, secondo me, vabbé, io faccio parte di un partito al governo, la concertazione che c'è al livello del governo credo che rimanga essenziale per fare iniziare a nascere un paese civile, è logico. Berlusconi invitò i sindacati a andare al mare, non a andare al governo, sicuramente queste differenze di vedute sono fondamentali per fare concertare e poi fare una riforma dello stato sociale come sta venendo ora che è abbastanza equa sotto tutti i punti di vista quindi, il comportamento del sindacato nazionale credo stia facendo una politica coraggiosa quindi è da apprezzare.

Invece in fabbrica...

No, in fabbrica c'è diciamo una massa di gente che è d'accordo con me in linea di massima, si può disquisire su alcune questioni ma in linea di massima si può dire che la massa silenziosa sia sempre in appoggio al sindacato, poi ci sono i soliti noti che sono quelli magari che hanno più coraggio di intervenire in assemblea, che stanno magari un pochino più indietro a queste cose che sono in dissenso continuo, lo erano quando si era 8000 in fabbrica quindi non sono personaggi che mi

preoccupano, lo stesso Cobas che per la prima volta si è presentato alle elezioni sicuramente tra tre anni quando si ripresenterà non riprenderà il consenso che ha avuto, quando non avrà portato nessun risultato ai lavoratori come sta facendo i lavoratori lo peseranno questo fatto. Io ho questa visione qui, l'ho anche esternata al rappresentante dello Slai-Cobas che mi ha risposto come, ne prenderemo il doppio. Io se tra tre anni smetterò di dare il mio contributo politico perché essendo coerente con me stesso anche qui non è che ci starò una vita, sto portando un gruppo di ragazzi giovani a dare un contributo con me, spero che fra due anni siano pronti, che io vivo questa cosa di ringiovanimento continuo come una cosa maniacale quindi è una soddisfazione per me avere dei personaggi dietro giovani che poi prendono il mio posto, queste sono le mie soddisfazioni. Quindi se tra tre anni potrò, anche se avrò voglia di dare attività sindacale, se mi vorranno i lavoratori. Sono convinto di questa cosa, che non portando nessun vantaggio ai lavoratori i lavoratori prima o poi glielo faranno pesare anche a livello di voto, è una cosa di cui sono convinto.

Un'altra questione che mi interessa, dato che faccio questi paragoni con l'Europa dell'Est, è come vede il lavoratore di Piombino il fatto che l'azienda che abbia anche stabilimenti all'estero, se è una cosa positiva o preoccupante.

Siccome il perché vengano portate queste lavorazioni all'estero poi in definitiva è il costo del lavoro, credo che ci sia una presa di coscienza in più rispetto a questo fatto, anche per essere più equilibrati nelle richieste per questo... è una domanda che si fanno i lavoratori, oramai penso che gli stipendi siano intorno alle 300000 lire, sono troppe?

TO-economie
Poles -

A Varsavia, no, sono circa 500000 lire.

Beh, sono aumentati sensibilmente...

Sì, anche i prezzi aumentano, il costo della vita, però...

Comunque penso sia anche uno stimolo per farsi qualche domanda in più anche per i lavoratori su questo tipo di lavorazioni.

Non è vissuta come una cosa positiva, anche se insomma alla fine sono lavoratori anche loro, io ho avuto tante discussioni di questo tipo coi lavoratori e quello che chiedevano era che il sindacato, da questo punto di vista credo abbia fatto qualche passo, sia più europeo da questo punto di vista, che tuteli i lavoratori in modo uguale perché solo così puoi tenere i diritti sindacali anche in Italia in tante questioni, non è certo regredendo i lavoratori in Italia ma cercando di fare battaglie per ottenere diritti per i lavoratori dell'Est, che ora sono sottopagati, e mi immagino come diritti sindacali siano indietro parecchio rispetto a noi, questo è uno sforzo che il sindacato deve fare non solo per dare una mano ai lavoratori dell'Est ma anche per darci una mano a noi, ai lavoratori nostri. D'altronde poi non è che puoi impedire a un imprenditore di andare all'estero, quindi io faccio l'esempio ho prelevato i soldi dalla Coop li ho massi nei Bot perché ci guadagno di più, quei 10 milioni che ho, quindi se Lucchini vuole abitare a Varsavia invece che a Piombino, uno dei suoi soldi può fare quello che vuole. Il sindacato può fare la sua parte dicendo in un modo più europeo sotto questo punto di vista, aiutando diciamo se ce n'è bisogno a fare delle lotte.

International action +
East-West divide
Globalisation -

Warsaw Solidarność 6 (hs6)**1.4.98**

Plant: Huta Lucchini-Warszawa

Trade union: Solidarity

Function in the union: delegate

Age: 45

Workshop: maintenance service

Job: electrician

Place of the interview:

1- union office in the plant

2- cafeteria close to the plant

Note: the first part of this interview (carried out in the union office without tape) is not reported here.

Transcript**Codes**

W którym roku został Pan przyjęty?

Byłem przyjęty w 73r., w listopadzie mam okrągło w sumkę 25 lat.

Zawsze pracowałem na jednym wydziale, to znaczy teraz to trochę inaczej nazywają, generalnie zajmuję się remontami suwnic, teraz są centralne służby remontowe, wcześniej byliśmy wydzieleni. W ogóle ta struktura organizacyjna całkowicie się zmieniła, byliśmy po prostu z wydziałami i tych wydziałów remontowych też było, każdy od czegoś innego był, teraz mamy bardziej zcentralizowane.

Więc wtedy praca była bardziej... regularna, każda grupa zajmowała się tym samym wydziałem i tymi samymi problemami?

Raczej nie, bo myśmy byli typowo obsługowym wydziałem, mogliśmy obciążyć bardziej też bez uszczerbku, bo tam mieli swoich konserwatorów, bo u nas na każde urządzenie musi być konserwator elektryka mechanika, bo takie są wymogi prawne w Polsce. A teraz jest wszystko zcentralizowane, centralnie tym się zajmujemy, tylko ewentualnie w wydziałach, wiadomo że te koszty, żeby oni mieli kontrolowane koszty, to u nich się zamawia po prostu części zamienne. Przedtem to chodziliśmy na remont, mieliśmy przygotowane wcześniej na całą tę pracę.

Jakie miał Pan wtedy wykształcenie?

Przyszedłem z wykształceniem zawodowym, później w trakcie skończyłem średnie, przy okazji po drodze ja lubię po prostu się rozwijać, więc zrobiłem dużo dodatkowych uprawnień, takich jak konserwatora urządzeń dźwigowych, spawacza uniwersalnego czyli mogłem obsługiwać i elektrycznie i palnikiem. W latach 70tych to zaczynałem takie podstawowe kursy, wiadomo gdzie tam... musiałem mieć, kierowcę wózka zrobiłem, kierowcę suwnicy, tak że mam tych zawodów dodatkowych, uprawnienia elektryczne, tych uprawnień mam, u mnie na wydziale chyba nie ma kogo, który mnie porównywał z tymi uprawnieniami dodatkowymi.

ID: work

Work: subjectivity

A tu to była pierwsza praca?

Tak, była pierwsza praca, bo był taki problem, że akurat nie miałem meldunku Warszawskiego, mieszkam 5 kilometrów pod Warszawą i nie mogłem dostać pracy tu w Warszawie, bo miałem pośrednictwo w Legionowie, bo wtedy jeszcze powiaty były, a powiat dał mi pracę ewentualnie w Nowym Dworze, w Legionowie, więc całkowicie nie po drodze, bo i tak musiałem jechać na dworzec Gdański, żeby jechać do Legionowa, bo innego połączenia nie było. Jedyne zakłady, który przyjmował po prostu bez pośrednictwa pracy, to była Huta, wszystkich obojętnie czy miał wykształcenie czy nie, czy podstawowe, przejmowano wszystkich. Dużo ludzi tu dlatego zaczęło pracować. Ja miałem pracować rok, pół roku i tak się zrobiło, nie wiem dlaczego ale wyszło jak wyszło.

Work: subjectivity
OPP: past

Ciekawe jest to, że wtedy więc dla tych, którzy chcieli, były jakieś możliwości rozwoju zawodowego, nie za dużo ale...

Różnie bywało. Ja na przykład chodząc do techniku wieczorowego jeden kierownik skierował mnie aby się doksztalać, a drugi mi utrudniał bo pracowałem wtedy w systemie 4-brygadowym, jest dużo uciążliwszy, są zajęcia i tam druga zmiana, nocna zmiana, było niewygodne chodzić. Niektórzy utrudniali i niektórzy chcieli na prawdę pomagać, ale uważam, że w tym systemie czy w tym jeżeli ktoś chce się doksztalać nie powinno być większego problemu.

Jest tylko jeden problem, i do tej pory tkwi, że właśnie się nie docenia albo za mało się docenia ludzi, którzy chcą się rozwijać zawodowo. Po prostu nie odpłaca się bo jeszcze nie dopracowaliśmy się, tak samo strona zarządu czy strona związkowa, nie opracowały takiego systemu wynagrodzenia, który premiowałby ludzi, którzy chcą podnosić kwalifikacje, bo jednak te pozostałości jak kiedyś przyjęli 12-osobową grupę, wiadomo że prawo nam zabrania, nie można nikomu obniżyć zarobków, a zarobek wiadomo wychodzi z jego grupy kategorii zaszeregowania, są takie niuanse że wychodzi jak wychodzi: faceci którzy mają załóżmy po techniku mają lidera po zawodowce bo za zasługi dostał... jednak te stosunki są bardzo źle ułożone, podejrzewam że to będzie długo trwało.

Egalitarianism -

Wcześniej to było tym bardziej bo wiadomo że z nomenklatury to wszystko. Z kolej teraz co ja obserwuję, bo są moje osobiste obserwacje, po prostu za dużo ludzi zostało którzy byli umoczeni w tamtym systemie i oni są nie przygotowani do tego, niestety w dalszym ciągu uzurpują sobie prawo żeby mieli jak największe możliwości dowodzenia tym wszystkim, ale to powinno się zmieniać bo ta zaszczość hamuje rozwój, zdecydowanie hamuje.

ID: class
Individualism

Zmieniło się bo patrząc na gospodarkę remontową, przedtem nie było żadnej gospodarki bo dla mnie nie było. Rzeczy się powielalo bo ja tutaj przeszedłem różne szczeble, byłem mistrzem brygadzystą tak że znam te zależności organizacyjne, wcześniej się powielalo zamówienia, rok się kończy nie było kserokopii ale przez kalkę, się powielalo zamówienia i nie liczysz czy to będzie kosztować czy będzie potrzebny, teraz jest ta presja zarządu żeby obniżyć te koszty bo dla mnie jest normalne i logiczne: jeżeli nie będziemy obniżyć tych kosztów, nie mamy co mówić o podwyższaniu wynagrodzeń bo firma nie będzie istniała, jest logiczne, nie trzeba dużo ekonomii bo u nas, w poprzednim systemie była taka ekonomia socjalistyczna, ekonomia nie może być socjalistyczna czy taka, ekonomia jest jedna przecież, to co się wyprodukuje co się sprzedaje, tym można gospodarować inaczej się nie da.

Past -

Nam uciekało kupa przecież tego, budowało się bloki mieszkalne, przedszkola, przedszkole było na naszym utrzymaniu, mój wydział miał przedszkole, i co ciekawsze my odchodząc z pracy, odrywając od swoich zadań wysłaliśmy tam ludzi tylko po to tylko, żeby ustawki naprawić i takie różne bzdety robić. I najgorsze było, że nawet dzieci nie mogliśmy... ci którzy u nas pracowali mieli problemy, żeby tam dzieci do tego przedszkola wysłać, to była normalna paranoja. Te bloki przecież przez zmianę form własności przepadły, ci pracownicy, którzy tam mieszkali zostali a reszta co z tego miała, nic ma nic przecież, a budowali to wszyscy przecież, akurat ta prywatyzacja poszła nie jak powinno się wszystko

Alternation -
Privatisation -
OPP: past

odbywać.

Wracając do przeszłości, w 80 r. Pan uczestniczył w ruchu „Solidarność”...

W pierwszych strajkach brałem udział, później pod stanem wojennym w strukturach podziemnych też miałem swój udział, tylko tyle że nie była taka działalność aktywna bo ja wtedy miałem kłopoty zdrowotne, przez jakiś czas byłem w ogóle wyłączony, po prostu byłem dużo na zwolnieniach tak że... Ale to co na wydziale się robiło to się robiło. Było nas kilku takich że byliśmy tak zakomórkowani żeby nam przypadkiem ktoś nas nie nakrył bo wiadomo co to groziło, zwolnienia itd, ale ci działacze czołowi, Karol Januszki, Seweryn Jaworski, wszystko to z nimi się zna, tylko mówię, że ludzi mogliśmy znać a nie wiedzieliśmy co robimy, bo to było wygodniejsze po prostu, bezpieczniejsze.

W tych strajkach w 80 r. o co chodziło najwięcej ludziom?

W Sierpniu 80 r. jak wybuchło to wszystko chodziły słuchy, że – łączność była zerwana, wiadomo – szczególnie ci grupowi partyjni, oni chodzili jak przynajmniej u mnie na wydziale, mówili “po co tam robia, żeby oderwać Gdańsk od Polski” takie różne propagandy rozszerzeli, i dopiero kiedy stąd się złapaliśmy grupa tam się przemiesciła i dopiero się orientowaliśmy o co w ogóle chodziło ale nie było kontaktu bezpośredniego bo telefon był zerwany. Huta rzeczywiście była jednym z tych sztandarowych zakładów, które ciągle do tych zmian. Wtedy można było wymienić Stocznnię Gdańską na wybrzeżu, tu w Warszawie Huta Ursus, ale Ursus w 76, z Radomem się zaczynał, bo potem jakoś nie można było za bardzo się skontaktować, przynajmniej ja nie miałem udziału, żeby ten kontakt utrzymać. Później ponosiliśmy skutki tego, że byliśmy sztandarem, jak Gdańsk, ponosi do tej pory Stocznia Gdańska, nie jest tak że padli sobie, działają mechanizmy polityczne niestety.

OPP: past political
ID: historical

Nawet w 89 r, tam zadziałał przez taki pod postacią Bank Inicjatyw Gospodarczych, to zakładało kilka osób, umoczonych w PZPRze dokładnie, oni tam prowadzili swojego majątku a resztę z ZUSu, z PZU, później jak przyjęli ten Bank Gdański zablokowali dokładnie, bo przecież inna produkcja będzie w zakładach ciężkich czy zwalniczych, tam gdzie produkuje się statki produkcja zamyka się w pół roku i dłużej, żeby statek wyprodukować, ktoś musi to obsługiwać, po prostu finansować to.

Zresztą tak samo będzie w hutnictwie, bo kupując złom, a sprzedając wyrób to musi cykl przejść i zanim to sprzedano to trzeba obsłużyć. Jak nas traktowali właśnie dlatego my dążyliśmy żeby ktoś przyszedł tutaj z kapitałem, bo po prostu nie mieliśmy szans żeby się utrzymać. Bo jeżeli przez te zatory słynne płatnicze były bo były, były nakręcane, jak teraz trudno jest powiedziane ale faktem jest że były, sprzedawaliśmy towary do innych zakładów i pieniędzy nie było. Były takie momenty, że trzeba było co, zaciągnąć kredyt, a 120% w skali miesięcznej na wypłaty dla pracowników, 6,5 miliardów złotych a trzeba było oddać za chwilę 13. To kładło tę hutę czy to się podobało czy nie to kładło na plecy. Popiwek, nie popiwek, nie za darmo, 35% obniżyliśmy sobie pensje, poszliśmy na 2 tygodniowy urlop bezpłatny, po to, żeby utrzymać tę firmę, bo tu chyba nie wszyscy dawali sobie sprawy co mogło się stać, najprościej, zamknąć ten zakład. Tylko na stronę ludzką patrząc ci ludzie mojego zawodu czy elektryk czy inny tu nie miałby problemu żeby znaleźć pracę, się tworzyłby problem dla tych zawodów stricte hutniczych, jakiś tam rozlewacz, walcownik, tu nie ma, co innego na Śląsku z jednej huty można byłoby do drugiego zakładu, a tutaj generalnie trzeba było przeszkolić tych ludzi i do tej pory nie istnieje nic takiego jak przeszkolenie całej branży hutniczej, czy komuś to się podoba czy nie musi to polskie hutnictwo się restrukturyzować, tylko że kwestia z tego co tutaj dyskutujemy w związku, z pracy też, pieniędzy były nawet przez Unię przeznaczone, tylko że Polacy nie mogli wykorzystać z tego.

Ja na przykład porozmawiałem z tymi kolegami ze Śląska, nie tylko z hut ale i z górnictwa, oni mówią jak można restrukturyzować górnictwo nie zaczynając od podstaw, np w Piekarach Śląskich istnieją dwie kopalni jedna funkcjonuje i dobrze, druga jest wymarła, musi być zlikwidowana bo nie ma co kopać ale szkoły górnicze są, i teraz co? produkować bezrobotnych? to jest problem, bo się produkuje bezrobotnych, ileś tam rocznie się kształci górników dołowych jak nie ma kogo zatrudnić, trzeba się zastanowić, w ogóle przedstawić szkolenie, kształcenie tego społeczeństwa bo przecież nie wiem czy przemysł samochodowy czy jakiś inny ale każdy nie górniczy, bo bez sensu.

Modernisation +
Industry -

Wracając do prywatyzacji, już powiedział Pan, że to wszystko nie było za darmo...

Najpierw byliśmy państwowym zakładem, potem spółką jednoosobową skarbu państwa i dopiero później szukaliśmy inwestora strategicznego żeby przyszedł z kapitałem, bo takie różne były uczucia ludzi, „po co wciągać kogoś z zagranicy ze sami możemy”, co możemy, jakie pieniądze włożyć?

Privatisation +

Po prostu ludzie nie zdawali sprawy, niestety, kształcenie było u nas jak było, powszechniak nie kształcił ludzi w odpowiednim kierunku ale tylko uczyli wszystkiego i jak wszystkiego to znaczy że nic, bo jak ja chodząc do szkoły zawodowej przez 2 lata miałem rysunek techniczny i przez 3 lata zaprzyjaźniony język to była paranoja. Co mi pomaga w moim zawodzie zaprzyjaźniony język rosyjski, a nie mając przedmiotu zawodowego taki jaki jest rysunek techniczny co jest podstawą każdego mechanika, jeżeli ktoś nie zna rysunku no to nie ma co szukać w mechanice, czy w elektryce, po prostu jest to postawa, jak nie wie co jest na rysunku nie wykona tego. Nie wiem po co potrzebny był ten język, ja Panie Boże nie mam nic przeciw temu jako językowi, tylko że ten obowiązek był zbytni. Po co mi było się uczyć gdzie w Afryce tamta stolica takiego państwa jest, po co mi było potrzebne, przecież jest to kierunek. U nas szkolnictwo było w dalszym ciągu nie reformowane.

ID: work

Na początku, w 89 roku, były nadzieje, że będzie lepiej?

W 89r jeszcze nie odczuwało tego, na tych pulkach był tylko ocet wszystko było na kartki, o tym ludzie zapomnieli, to się zmieniło, ale niestety tak było. Ja wiem że ludzi nie zdali sobie sprawy jakie koszty się poniesie tej transformacji ale nie ma nic za darmo, tu się nie da robić że jak zmienimy ustrój to będziemy od razu w Ameryce, do Ameryki nam bardzo daleko, oni 200 lat dochodzili do tego co mają tej demokracji, my mieliśmy 200 lat niewoli więc 200 lat różnicy, zresztą po wojnie też oni się dorabiali na wojnie my straciliśmy, nasi się sprzedali dokładnie, dokładnie, 50 lat, prawie 50 lat totalitarnej władzy zmarnowane były, wiadomo że na początku przecież ci ludzie zrobili dużo bo odbudować tak szybko tak postawić wszystko na nogi tylko że nikt nie wykorzystał tego do końca, bo później zaczęły te problemy, bo co raz bardziej się centralizowało.

Alternation +
Past -

Ja nie jestem z Warszawy i pamiętam, że to środowisko wiejskie, mieszkalem u dziadka, on miał takie małe gospodarstwo rolne i te obowiązkowe dostawy, wszystko było wariactwem, jakie tylko ten system wymyślił, wiadomo że są różne kategorie gruntu i można tam coś wyhodować, ale nie było ważne miał oddać i żyto i żywca i wieprzowego i wołowego i wszystkiego po trochu. Jechać na targi żeby kupić i to obowiązkowo oddać, było to co hamowało cały ten rozwój. Nie mówiąc już o tych bandyckich zachowaniach tej władzy w stosunku do opozycji, bo cały ten kwiat, przez wigilię kazamatę zrobili tych ludzi, i to szeregowych ludzi. On walczył dla wolności Polski i później co, od Polaka, niby od Polaka, zamknął go i go zniszczył. Ale tak, nie po kolei...

Past -

Nie ważne, że nie po koleju. Ale wielu mówi że było lepiej...

Mówią „było lepiej”, ja pytam „komu było lepiej?” Nawet rozmawiając na OPP: past

wydziale, przestał pracować facet, bo przeszedł na emeryturę, on mówi, że było Past -
 lepiej. Ja mówię, „czym było lepiej, na wczasy mógł jechać ale teraz nie możesz
 jechać? Nie pamiętasz, przecież jesteś starszy ode mnie, jak ja pamiętam, ty też
 powinien pamiętać, że jak było nas ponad 250 osób na wydziale, a przychodziły
 dwa zafundowane miejsca czteroosobowe, to kto wyjeżdżał? Tylko ta
 nomenklatura i ci sami ludzie. Do sanatorium tak samo było, jakiś tam sekretarz
 jechał 2 razy w roku, inni nie pojechali w ogóle.

Talony na samochód kto dostał? Wiadomo kto.” I co ciekawsze że nie jak teraz,
 tylko ludzie nie zauważają, wyjeżdża ktoś nowym samochodem z fabryki,
 przejeżdża kawałek i musi taniej sprzedać. Wcześniej jak się brało na talon facet go
 sprzedawał za dwukrotną wartość jak nowy, to są fakty przecież. Tak że dostał 2-3
 talony, niestety wartość rynkowa starego samochodu była wyższa, bo nie było
 rynku ale on funkcjonował trochę inaczej. Trochę inaczej było trochę dalej na
 Wschód, ale u nas nie zdążyli, żeby ukołetyzować tak bardzo, bo jednak trochę tej
 prywatnej inicjatywy zostało, trochę handlu, trochę usług, trochę tego zostało. I
 dzięki temu jesteśmy teraz w lepszej sytuacji jak tam jest.

I sytuacja teraz, po prywatyzacji, jak wygląda? Powody niezadowolenia załogi...

Generalnie... tutaj w pewnym momencie było zrobiony błąd. Obecnie jeden z Alternation -
 członków zarządu jest dawny mój kierownik i on jest strasznym optymistą i mówi
 „jak będzie kapitał od razu będziemy zarabiać 7, 10 \$ na godzinę”, takie gadanie
 niestety, ale w jakiś sposób trzeba było zachęcać tych ludzi. Przecież
 niezadowolenie będzie zawsze, ja akurat jestem w takiej sytuacji, że rozmawiam z
 dużo ludzi i tych ludzi reprezentuję bo mnie wybrali, najgorsze są rozmowy, jak z
 jednym człowiekiem rozmawiam, bo uważa że dla niego mam załatwić wszystko a
 dla innych nie.

Będzie zawsze zderzenie różnych grup zawodowych w takiej firmie, bo teraz 2 tys. Corp
 ludzi i wiadomo, produkcja będzie narzekać, że ci z utrzymania ruchu są
 niepotrzebni w sumie, z kolej, też taki błąd na wzajem.

Ale to chyba już było, zawsze w dużych fabrykach...

Zgadzam się. Jeszcze problemem jest to, że kiedyś nie było utajnienia zarobków, TOT: economic
 do tej pory tego nie ma, i do póki coś nie się zmieni i ktoś przez rękę zagląda i wie TOT: class
 że ten zarobi tyle on nie patrzy czy on jest lepszy. Problem jest w czym innym
 przecież, że generalnie w tym kraju się mało zarabia, te zarobki są rzeczywiście nie
 zbyt wysokie w stosunku do utrzymania, nie mówię w stosunku do wykonanej
 pracy, tylko do utrzymania, bo jeżeli założymy budżet domowy taki jakie przyniesze
 dwie osoby które pracuje, i 70% tego idzie na pokrycie tego założymy mieszkania,
 opłaty, zostaje, jeżeli byłoby jak w normalnym kraju, że koszty wynoszą tyle,
 założymy 40, 60% wynagrodzenia i, nie wiem, teoretyzuję w tej chwili, ale można
 było to zagospodarować w inny sposób, tak niestety ci ludzie... ja przynajmniej to
 odbieram, że dyrektor nie może zarobić tyle ile robotnik, sprzączka nie może
 zarobić tyle co pierwszy wytopiacz, bo to byłby bzdet, ale ona generalnie za mało
 zarabia i z kolej mówi, że on za dużo zarabia, nie, nie on za dużo tylko ona za
 mało. Jest ten problem.

Odczuciem ludzi jest to, że tamten zarabia za dużo a ja tak ciężko zarabiam że za
 mało. My staraliśmy się wypracować taki system, że ta rozbieżność w tych grupach
 ma być 1-3, powiedzmy w tych firmach, bo też trzeba się na tym zastanowić, czy
 płaca ma być tylko socjalna, bo można tak robić, że będzie tylko sprawą socjalną,
 czy też ma być motywacyjny system wynagradzania, bo do tego trzeba właśnie
 dojść, żeby było motywacyjne. Bo jak kiedyś było, że czy stoisz czy leży, tyle samo
 się należy, to mieliśmy jak mieliśmy.

Teraz trzeba właśnie nad tym pracować, my pracujemy w tym kierunku, tylko ID: class
 mówię, nie wszystkim to się podoba, szczególnie tym którzy nic nie robią.

Ja im mówię idź do pana prezesa i staraj się dostać lepsze warunki, wtedy będziesz zadowolony i siedzieć. Ale nie możesz krytykować, nie możesz mnie oceniać, bo ja w sumie reprezentuję kogoś, jak ty stoisz na boku, tylko osobie cię obchodzi, bo przecież wszyscy jesteśmy winni, zastanawmy się na tym, jeżeli ktoś ponosi to ryzyko że ciebie reprezentuję, bo przecież ryzyko się ponosi jeżeli jest się reprezentantem tej załogi, bo można komuś za głos się podobać, komuś za oczy. I można dostać za dowody. A on stoi z boku. Teraz dylemma. Założmy, redukcja zatrudnienia, kogo mam bronić, jakie stanowiska pracy?, konkretnie mam bronić członków związku, nie obchodzą mnie, ci którzy stoją z boku... bo jeżeli wybrali sobie inną drogę, szanuję jego wolność, proszę bardzo, broń się sam. Takie jest moje odczucie.

Isol

Ci, którzy nie należą do związków, czy krytykują wyraźnie związki? Jakie mają argumenty?

Generalnie chodzi o to, że te zarobki są za niskie, i na tym się położył cały konflikt tego. Teraz, czy oni mają argumenty? Dla mnie to nie są żadne argumenty, jeżeli ktoś stara się przekrzyczeć a nie dają jakiś dowodów, podstaw, aby pokazać w którym kierunku iść. Do lipca jest daleko, mamy porozumienie podpisane w lutym bo pracowaliśmy nad tym 4 miesiące i też mówili że za długo czy tam... ale rozmowy są takie jakie są, negocjacje, ja mogę sobie założyć dużo, wynegocjuje ileś tam, mogę uważać to za sukces, a ktoś mi powie że to jest błąd.

TOT: bargaining

Argument jeden, że, teraz się pogubiłem trochę... Dzisiaj rozmawiałem, było akurat 3 kolegów ze związku i jeden bezzwiązkowy. I się pytam, „czeka nas lipcowa podwyżka płac, ona jest... powiedziano, że średnia zatrudnionego jest kwota. Tylko, że teraz te średnie trzeba dopasować gdzieś i powiedzcie jak to zrobić, chyba macie lepsze rozwiązania, pomysły”. Każdy mówił „no, tak najlepiej jest: ty negocjujesz i ty bierzesz odpowiedzialność”. Nawet doradzić nie ma chętnego, bo później najprościej jest krytykować, że się zrobiło to źle. Tylko że jak jest czas, żeby nad tym porozmawiać bez krzyku, bez hałasu, zastanowić się, w którym kierunku ma to pójść, jak ma to być podzielone, można sobie usiąść, rachunek jakiś symulacyjny zrobić, gdzie, jakie pieniądze przekazać, to wszystko można robić, tylko trzeba chcieć, rozmawiać po prostu na faktach, a nie krzyczeć na mnie, że jestem niedobrym wujkiem, bo bez sensu.

To są delikatne decyzje. Jak związkowcy orientują się przy takich podziałach, bardziej według zasad motywacyjnych czy w obronie tych, którzy zarabiają najmniej...

Wie pan, związkowcy.... Związkowcy to dla mnie są wszyscy, którzy należą do związków. To są wszyscy związkowcy. Trzeba było się zastanowić nad jednym obliczem. Kwestia, nie wiem czy przygotowania, czy dożycia, czy wykształcenia, czy inteligencji nawet, bo będąc na komisji zakładowej widzę że ludzie siedzą, oni tam są. I później rozmawiamy na jakieś tam tematy i później skutki są odwrotne akurat, bo on nie... nawet jeżeli dojdziemy do jakiegoś konsensusu, potem jesteśmy między innymi, ze sobą się pokłócić. Jeżeli mamy się pokłócić, to się kłóćmy w jakimś tam gronie, ale później jak wychodzimy wychodzimy z jednym zdaniem bo na tym polega demokracja.

Org

Najgorzej to mnie denerwuje, że wychodzi facet i mówi do swoich ludzi „oni tam sobie tak robią”, nie „oni” tylko „my” bo ty tam byłeś przecież, dlaczego mówisz „oni” a nie „ja”. Przecież przez region są robione szkolenia, nie wiem dlaczego nie wszyscy chcą jechać, się dowiedzieć czegoś nowego. Ja byłem akurat na kilku takich szkoleniach, niektórzy mogą powiedzieć, że to nie żadne szkolenie, ale według mnie dużo dają.

TOT: bargaining
TUCom: technical

Są one o negocjacji, o prawie pracy?

Są różne, sprawy pracy, negocjacyjne, układu zbiorowego pracy, nawet jeszcze jest taki którego jeszcze nie zaliczyłem, ale mam nadzieję że wybiorę się na nie w najbliższym czasie, takie szkolenie „gra przedsiębiorstwem”. Bardzo ciekawe szkolenie, bo daje pole do popisu, że przez chwilę człowiek staje się właścicielem i musi sobie pograć na tych danych, żeby się utrzymać na rynku, jest to rzeczywiście bardzo potrzebne szkolenie, bo u nas na razie ten związek taki jest jaki jest. Lata walki, to była dystrykcja. Niestety jak się walczy to jest czynem, bo wiadomo gonienie z tymi radami, z tymi nie wiadomo gdzie.

ID: class

Teraz zmieniły się czasy, należałoby podejść do pracy bardziej profesjonalnej, bardziej merytorycznej, bo kiedyś krzyknęło się, nie podoba się? to strajk, jak było na początku 80tych lat. A te strajki do czego prowadziły, prowadziły m. in. do wyniesienia tego, co było już wyniesione, niestety taka jest prawda, ale inaczej wtedy się nie dało, bo nikt nie chciał rozmawiać i dopiero kiedy się stuknęło mocno... wtedy to była konieczność a teraz trzeba zmienić, trzeba zacząć rozmawiać o argumentach.

OPP: past

Alternation +

Co z tego, że pójde do zarządu i nakrzyczę, jak powiedzą „wariat przyszedł i nie ma nic do powiedzenia, tylko po prostu krzyczy”, posłuchają ale będzie wszystko dalej tak jak było. A u nas to się zmienia wszystko, i dobrze by było jakby do tego ludzi podchodzili w miarę profesjonalnie, czyli najpierw przygotowywać się do tego.

Bo przecież teraz dla związku jest też niewygodna sytuacja wygrania tych wyborów. Dla mnie jako związkowca jest to niewygodne, bo tracimy kupę wartościowych ludzi, którzy poszli w wielką politykę. I zostało wielu mniej tu na dole, i odbudować te kadry, jakiś czas minie.

Nie byłoby lepiej, jeżeli Solidarność nie uczestniczyłaby tak bezpośrednio...

Wiem, że byłoby lepiej, tylko znowu jest problem: z kim napisać układ? jeżeli założymy jak w innych krajach jest partia polityczna i ona potrzebuje poparcia związku zawodowego, podpisuje kontrakt. A u nas ten kontrakt się zrobił ale środkiem tego kontraktu był związek zawodowy, bo teraz te wybory wygrane były dzięki czemu, tylko związkowi, bo te ZChNy, KPNy, to podzielenie sceny politycznej, tej prawej strony było tak duże, że wreszcie trzeba było ująć w karby, i jest ten zlepek, ale to jest zlepek na razie, nie jest jakaś silna partia, z którą można było zawierać kontrakt jako związek.

TOT: political

Najlepszy by był układ, lewa strona, prawa strona, centrum, i wtedy związek jest tylko związkiem zawodowym i może podpisać kontrakt z taką partią, jeżeli to się nie wywiązuje, to wtedy my wycofujemy poparcie i nie ma żadnego problemu. Tak, że to byłby najlepszy układ, ale długo jeszcze nie będzie tego, bo nie tylko u nas ale też w innych krajach to jedzie tak, że najpierw się rzuca jakąś tam kielbasę i to co się pisze to wtedy można wymagać. Wiadomo, polityka jest takim wrednym zawodem, że jak ktoś spełni ze swoich obietnic 10-20% to jest dobry, bo założenia że wszystko ładne piękny program długi i mądry i potem wykonanie jest takie jakie jest.

*Pan opowiedział jak wygląda debata między związkowcami a bezzwiązkowymi...
ilu ludzi należy do związków w Pańskim wydziale, mniej więcej?*

U nas oceniamy 80%. Ja mówię o swoim związku bo o tym drugim nie wiem dokładnie, w sumie u nas są tylko takie szczątki, jest bardzo mało z OPZZ, przeważnie są starzy ludzie partyjni, którzy... W pewnym momencie jako alternatywa dla zdelegalizowanej Solidarności powstał OPZZ i większość wtedy się wpisali mistrzowie, brygadziści, osoby funkcyjne, i one zostały. Niektóre miały taką odwagę żeby się wycofać, niektórzy zostali. Też przecież znam takich ludzi że mówią „czemu ja na stare lata będę się przepisywał?” W ogóle on myśli tak a nie jak powinien.

Podczas całego procesu restrukturyzacji, pracownicy, którzy odeszli, co teraz robią? I fachowcy i ludzi z produkcji.

Trudno mi jest mówić o ludziach z produkcji, znam tam, niektórzy którzy odchodzili stało się co się stało. Bo myśmy nie przeprowadzili tego jakby na żywioł nie było puszczane, te odejścia, były zrobione po prostu, większość ludzi odeszła, którzy chcieli odejść.

Ze strony ludzkiej było to dobre, ludzie potrafili ustalić się, zaklimatyzować się gdzieś indziej. Gorzej by było, bo są tacy ludzie, których nauczyła ta komuna że za rączki prowadzić i do knajpy, bo tak się określało „za rączki i do knajpy”, więc oni znikli po prostu. Ja mam na przykład dużo znajomych, którzy jakoś tam się ustawili, ale są tacy, którzy bardzo chętnie wróciliby też, jeżeli byłaby tylko tworzona taka możliwość, bardzo chętnie, bo oni po prostu nie znaleźli się w tej rzeczywistości. Tutaj byli jakoś funkcjonowani i poszli na swoje, czy do innych zakładów, czy gdzieś tam, po prostu nie wytrzymali tego, funkcjonują tak jak funkcjonują, chcieliby niektórzy wrócić, znam sporo takich ludzi. A niektórzy po prostu się chwalą że odeszli. Dla tych, którzy bardziej byli odważni wiadomo że odważniejszy albo stracisz albo odzyskasz, ale jak dobrze umiesz kręcisz to jakoś się utrzymasz.

Teraz jaka jest atmosfera? Pracownicy Huty szukają lepsze oferty? Są niezadowoleni, czy raczej starają trzymać, to co mają?

Panu powiem tak, że ci młodzi odeszli, nie jest to stara załoga. Trzeba się liczyć z tym, że starego drzewa raczej się nie przesadza, a drugie ci ludzie mogą płakać, sobie narzekać, ale wiedzą też doskonale, że mając 48-50 lat to już nie jest tak łatwo gdzieś indziej znaleźć. Zresztą mówię, te rozmowy takie z ludźmi, czy rozmawiają na argumentach? na żadnych argumentach nie rozmawia, „a bo gdzieś ktoś tam zarabia dobrze”; ja mówię „jakie ma on wykształcenie, ile ma lat?”. Albo „moja córka...”, twoja córka to ma 20 kilka lat, ma wykształcenie wyższe, dwa języki, znajomość komputera, a ty co, jak się nauczyłeś tymi szymilcami kręcić, to cały czas kręcisz. Bo to też wcale nie jest zdrowe że tak długo w jednym zakładzie się pracuje, wcale nie jest tak dobre, szczególnie jak tutaj bo co z tego, czy tutaj coś się zmienia, technologia, teraz dopiero zaczyna się zmieniać, przez lata nie zmieniały się przecież, i ci ludzie na pewnym poziomie zostawali, bo po prostu tak życie ich zmusiało do tego żeby się rozwijali, żeby wchodziły nowe jakieś urządzenia, nowe technologie, popracowania.

Ja pracowałem i pracuję tutaj, dorabiam w różnych firmach prywatnych nie prywatnych. Tam stosunki między poradcawcami i pracownikami jest dżungla, totalna dżungla. Jeżeli facet ma pracę to pracownicy przychodzą do pracy, jeżeli nie ma pracy to „dobra posiedźcie w domu, a najlepiej idźcie na zwolnienie jakieś”, najlepiej jak 35 dni minęło, bo pierwsze 35 dni musi on zapłacić a za resztę...

To ciekawy problem. Bo służba remontowa na Zachodzie jest często odrębiona, i przejmują ludzi tylko na okres remont na przykład...

U nas z nowu wyszła, i to mocno wyszła ta plotka, już była w zeszłym roku, nasiliła się listopad grudzień, że od 1go stycznia już jesteśmy wyodrębnieni z huty, bo tak jak mówią, to określają jako prywatyzowanie ale ja mówię „chwileczkę, my już jesteśmy prywatną firmą, jak możemy się drugi raz sprywatyzować? tylko możemy się wydzielić z tej spółki”. Teraz znowu się nasiliło, mówili że od 1go kwietnia, pierwszy kwiecień jest dzisiaj akurat, i nikt nikomu nic nie zmienił. Więc ja sobie zdaję sprawę, że na przykład w hucie aluminium tam rzeczywiście się tworzyło tych spółek spółeczek z tego przedsiębiorstwa, ale generalnie jak są te zapędy... Pan B., on chciał robić tutaj jak w Piombino, że silnie te służby remontowne on tam miał, teraz zmieniło się bo przyszedł C. i inaczej widzi.

Ja ze swojego doświadczenia mówię, pracuję tyle lat, nie widzę tutaj, żeby my

Difference

Modernisation +

OPP: class
Work: subjectivity
Second job
Outsourcing

Outsourcing

poszli jako sfera usługowa, bo i tak część tych służb, jak się nazywa modnie „służby utrzymania ruchu”, one nie są przygotowane żeby wykonywać to co do nich należy. Do nich należałoby rzeczywiście utrzymywanie tych maszyn, przewidywanie kiedy remont jest potrzebny, jak on jest potrzebny. Ja pracuję od tygodnia na remoncie w walcowni średniej, tak patrzyłem, to jest dla mnie nie do pomyślenia, że w trakcie remontu ja dopiero określę czy ja mam tę część wymienić czy nie, i okazuje się, że ona jest zużyta.

Szanując prywatną firmę, to przecież albo sobie ja bym brał dodatkową robotę, albo po prostu bym się zginął i wyszedł z tego, bo dla mnie nieprzygotowany remont to ja tracę pieniądze. Co z tego, że wystawiam z warsztatu ludzi i nie mają co robić? Dopiero się wywozi część tego. Tak że tutaj najpierw należałoby nauczyć się współpracy między tymi służbami które są na wydziale a tymi centralnymi, dopiero wtedy można byłoby mówić o sprywatyzowaniu, z nowu to słowo, wyłączeniu tego z struktury huty. Było nie było, tutaj działało jakie prawo, przecież ja tłumaczę swoim kolegom, że tu na razie nic nie proponowałem, na jakiej zasadzie ma to być, jaka umowa będzie dla pracowników. Bo przecież logiczna jest sprawa, jeżeli mają odnosić korzyści i ma odnosić firma, to znaczy że ma to odnosić pracownik, na razie nikt o tym nie mówi, bo póki co, to względnie znam ten kodeks pracy jako taki, to co mi jest najbardziej potrzebne, to muszę nawet jeszcze jednego szkolenia układy zbiorowe pracy.

Outsourcing

Wydziałając właśnie te spółki ja nie mam zamiaru pracować tak jak pracuje firma A., tam mają taki bałagan, pracowników traktują jak po prostu za rzecz, nie jest traktowany jak człowiek, co z tego że ktoś mnie poklepie, tego, jak za każdym razem będzie mnie oszukiwać. Oni też wykonują pracę tu na terenie huty i też bardzo nie pomagaliśmy związki zakładać, dwa miesiące, po dwóch miesiącach zlikwidowano je jako związki, bo ludzie byli nie przygotowani po prostu, bo ta grupka, która zakładała tam, pracodawca zaczął pilnować, żeby tam przypadkiem kogoś tam namierzył, że sobie gdzie tam skończył, wykupił artykuł 52 i go wyrzucił, i w ten sposób zlikwidowali sobie tę grupę.

Outsourcing

Tutaj związek zawodowy jest w stanie utrzymać się, w razie czego?

Przynajmniej w tej chwili obserwując będąc na różnych tych spotkaniach i negocjacjach z zarządem, widać ten duch, tę atmosferę, że ona jest inna niż była przed tym słynnym strajkiem naszym. Całkiem co innego, inaczej, ci ludzie się w sumie nie zmienili, bo kilka osób się zmieniło, ze strony zarządu i u nas też, ten duch w ogóle, ta atmosfera nasza panująca jest inna jak była kiedyś.

Tam była jeszcze taka nieufność w stosunku do siebie, teraz jakieś ramy tam są wypracowane, my wiemy, założmy na co jest stać stronę przeciwną, bo jeżeli zasiadamy do negocjacji to zawsze będziemy stronami przeciwnymi, bo są interesy różne, ale chociaż ducha, atmosfera, dogadania też jest ważna. Bo jeżeli z góry założymy, że się nie dogadamy, to możemy nie siadać do rozmów, bo po co.

OPP

TOT: bargaining

Czy modernizacja, która występuje, jest wystarczająca, czy idzie za wolno?

Zdecydowanie za wolno, opóźnienie jest tyle co jest, że nawet kiedy byli Niemcy tutaj z IG Metallu, to jeden szczególnie tam się interesował tym co OSM, ja mówiłem, że wygraliście, że to trochę później go postawiliście bo on jest trochę nowocześniejszy tak jak u nich jest, ale z kolej te opóźnienia ta konjunktura na stal, to my nie mieliśmy na czym produkować, teraz nie ma konjunktury, no mamy ten piec ale nie wiem. Z tego, co zakładają, że do maja idzie do pełnej zdolności produkcyjnej, że wszystkie odbiory gwarancyjne, rzeczywiście się odbędzie na pełnej tej mocy. Z kolej się zacznie problem na walcowni, to już trzeba przecinać na pół, żeby one weszły do tych starych pieców, ta modernizacja musiała jedno drugie musiała po prostu. Ale u nas jest takie prawo jakie jest, opóźnienia nie były winą tylko tutaj inwestora, były winy polskiego rządu niestety, to się dało odczuwać, na przykład renegocjowanie tej umowy, co z tego wychodziło,

OPP: political
Modernisation +

negocjacje trwały z tamtym rządem a nic się nie działo, półtora roku rozmawiali i nic, dopiero kiedy przyszedł nowy rząd i one się skończyły dosyć szybko.

Wtedy mogliśmy zawieść umowę płacową, bo nikt nie wiedział jak to będzie szło, czy do upadłości, bo taki moment był, to zagrożenie było, kończyły się linie kredytowania. Nie wszyscy ludzie wiedzą co to jest otworzenie linii kredytowych, wiadomo że trzeba obsługiwać linie kredytowe, od razu są koszty, nie modernizuje się tylko te pieniądze się traci bo trzeba obsługiwać.

Niektórzy właśnie mówią „Włoch przyszedł tylko po to, żeby same zyski...”, OPP-national przecież teraz się obserwuje, że tych Włochów jest dużo mniej.

W zarządzie, na tych kierowniczych stanowiskach wysokich, jest niewielu doradców, u nas modnie się nazywało że plastrów, bo było tak ładnie zrobione, że niby przyszedł konsultant, mówiło się że konsultant a to u nas się nazywali plastry, bo on decydował ale Polak pod tym się pospisywał, taka była w sumie dwuwładza, różnie było to przez ludzi odbierane. Ale ja na przykład nie pozwoliłbym, że jak mam czymś kierować i ktoś ma doradzać, jako doradca proszę bardzo ale decyzja należy do mnie, bo mam pod nią się podpisać, byłoby bez sensu.

W Fiacie też tak było...

U nas też tak było, kierownicy wydziału, każdy miał swojego konsultanta, teraz już jest mniej. Teraz dyrektorem operacyjnym jest Polak, dyrektor d/s ekonomicznych jest Polak, tak że tu też się zmienia. Kiedyś z Dr. M. rozmawiałem, mówi „proszę Pana, czy nam jest tak wygodnie tu w Polsce być?” Miał 50 lat mówi „ja mam żonę dzieci rodzinę, raz na miesiąc jadę do domu”. Dla niego też nie było za wygodnie, u nas się udało, „oni tu przyjechali z tego...”, co, że oni tak chętnie tu przyjechali, że pracy nie mają u siebie? Robotnik może nie mieć pracy, a nie facet, który ma poukładane u głowie.

Ten fakt, że kapitał jest zagraniczny, już nie odgrywa specjalnej roli?

To jeszcze jest, jest jeszcze ten podział że Włosi a my, ale on trochę chyba zanika, ale jeszcze da się odczuwać.

Jak widzicie rolę Włoskich związków zawodowych? Bo przecież nie ma kontaktów...

Nie ma kontaktów. To mnie dziwi, że my nie możemy z nimi nawiązać kontaktów, z Niemcami można a z Włochami nie, to mnie dziwi, bo jeżeli pracujemy w koncernie powinniśmy się informacjami dzielić, w którym kierunku można byłoby, załóżmy, iść wspólnie. Bo wiadomo, że nie da się wszystkiego załatwić. Przecież nie wiem czy nie zauważają tego, że następuje w Europie podział pracy, koncerny duże się łączą przecież, nie? Dlaczego ludzie nie chcą się koncentrować, żeby wiedzieć co im grozi, z której strony. Bo nawet to Daewoo długo będzie potrzeba póki General Motors... i może Koreńczyków w ogóle, bo oni odkupią niektóre wydziały większościowe i ten General Motors znowu się zrobi najsilniejszy, i podział pracy następuje na rynku. To jest przecież niebezpieczne dla pracownika, powinni ludzie się w tym kierunku jednak zjednoczyć i dochodzić do jakichś wspólnych wniosków uzgodnień, żeby przeciwdziałać w jakiś sposób.

Internazional action +
Globalisation

Rzeczywiście jest trochę prawdy w tym, że przede wszystkim w tych największych hutach Lucchiniego we Włoszech, ludzie nie patrzą dużo dalej od granic swojego miasteczka. Teraz, tutaj trochę młodych pracowników jeszcze jest, jaki jest ich stosunek do związku zawodowego?

Ja powiem Panu tak, ogólnie, ci młodzi, którzy przychodzą teraz do pracy, jest sporo, bo setka przyszła, oni są po prostu zapraszani do związku, są kierowani do tego. My staramy się nad nimi jakąś opiekę...

Gen -

Czy oni przychodzą z umową na czas określony?

Nie, u nas prawo mówi, że pierwsze 3 miesiące jest to okres próbny, od 3 miesięcy, ale tak jest że... część z nich na pewno będzie, część na pewno odejdzie. To nie za dużo się zmieniło jeszcze, bo ludzie po prostu przyjdzie, on może sobie wyobrazić że, nie wiadomo ile zarabiał, będzie miał dochody duże, i to i tamto, i zderzenie będzie inne, i ta praca jednak tu nie jest łatwa, nie jest fabryka czekolady czy czegoś innego, jest ciężka praca, czasami trzeba naprawdę się... Na razie nie ma tych problemów z młodymi ludźmi, bo na razie takich nie mamy, mamy młodych ok. 30letnich, bo dla mnie człowiek 30 lat jest młodym człowiekiem, ale on pracuje już ok. 10 lat, pod względem stażu pracy nie jest nowy, nie jest młody. Jest przeżarające że nie ma żadnej polityki kadrowej przynajmniej u mnie w centralnych służbach remontowych. Żadnej polityki zatrudnienia, bo odchodzi od nas generalnie sporo ludzi ze względu na wiek, i nie uzupełnia się tego, i byli szkolenia dobrego elektryka, dobrego mechanika, na te urządzenia, u nas szkoły są nieprzygotowane do tego, bo nikt nie uczy, żeby wymienić koła, są takie specyficzne, że to trzeba przez lata praktyki, ja tak oceniam, że przy zaangażowaniu tego młodego pracownika trzeba go szkolić rok półtora, żeby on rzeczywiście się stał pełnowartościowym pracownikiem, takim, że można mu powiedzieć założmy samodzielną pracę, bo pod nadzorem będzie pracować, ale gorzej będzie jak się skoncza te kadry starsze i przyjdzie rzeczywiście świeża brygada, bo nie ma tu takich sił, które potrafiłyby robić takie usługi wyspecjalizowane, bo Warszawa jest takim środowiskiem jakim jest, tych zakładów pracy przemysłowych dużych za dużo nie ma, co tam, Sierki, założmy, elektrocieplownia, Daewoo, ale tam jest całkiem inny profil produkcji.

ID: work

Więc te stosunki z młodymi pracownikami jak się układają? We Włoszech jest sporo problemów z młodymi pracownikami, oni mają inne podejście do pracy... Poza tym, w Piombino jest duża różnica wieku, przez 10 lat nie przejmowano, jest taka przepaść...

Wiadomo, ja mam syna, który ma 20 lat, on inaczej trochę myśli jak ja. Jak się razem mieszka, to są problemy, najlepiej jak się mieszka na odległość, każde pokolenie się rządzi swoimi... a jeżeli jest przepaść, nie ma tych szczebelków, ta przepaść zostaje, nie da się tak łatwo nią zlikwidować.

Gen

A polityka to ważny temat dla związku? Bo Pan mówił, że jest niewygodna sytuacja, a załoga co myśli?

Pewnie, że są pretensje do związku w polityce, tym bardziej że u nas ta nazwa Solidarność przecież m.in. przegrywa. Bo przecież w 80r 10 milionów było, tylko ja się pytam, czy tam było 10 mil rzeczywiście ile tam było nadślanych, ilu komuchków? Był taki ruch, że nikt tego nie kontrolował, wszystko się spisało. Nawet znam tutaj z zakładu pracy, że sekretarz podstawowej organizacji partyjnej wpisał się do Solidarności, tylko nie wiem co on tam robił, po co tam był? Czy on przeszkadzać chciał, te struktury zniszczyć, czy był prowokatorem, czy rzeczywiście z przekonania postępował, tak że można różnie sobie to odbierać. Później stało się co się stało. Wałęsa mówił „bierzcie w swoje ręce”, co wzięliśmy w swoje ręce, praktycznie nic.

Spółdzielnie mieszkaniowe, samorządy terytorialne, jakieś tam osiedlowe, inne, to w sumie zostało w starych rękach. Mi na przykład mówią, że czynsz podnoszą, a ja „co, to ma pracodawca to wyrównać? Dlatego, że oni co dwa miesiące czynsz podnoszą, to on ma co dwa miesiące dokładać do pensji?”

OPP: past

Work: extrawork +

A możecie się zainteresować, dlaczego ten czynsz jest taki, może jest za dużo administracji jest, trzeba z tym się też liczyć. W tym kraju akurat nie da się związkowi odejść z polityki, jest to nierealne, musi się zajmować z tą polityką, czy

TOT: political

mniesz czy większą, ale musi.

Nastąpiła ta gruba kreska, to przez ludzi, którzy są w UW a mówili o obozie postsolidarnościowym... ja się pytam, czy oni byli w ogóle w Solidarności, czy byli tylko doradcami po to, żeby szybciej wypłynąć. Bo zauważamy, że ten ruch ma akurat powodzenie, że szybciej się rozbija ten kapitał i szybciej się wyjdzie od tego, i rzeczywiście wyszli, Balcerowicz jaki jest taki jest ale co? Był w Solidarności, jest profesor i on jest teoretykiem, jest w Unii i co, będzie o sprawach pracowniczych pamiętać? To się nie da.

Ludzie mają na przykład, i to często się spotyka nie tylko tutaj na zakładzie, tacy działacze, ci starsi z 80. lat, jak Rulewski z Bydgoszczy, jego byli, teraz siedzi w Unii, jak Frasyński inni kurczę, u nas w regionie, ten przed Maćkiem co był, Boni, który później liberałem się robił od razu, wyszedł tutaj jako przewodniczący regionu Mazowsze, i był silny region, bo jest silny w dalszym ciągu, poszedł do liberałów, to parodia. Bujak też. Tak go obserwuję, on tak szuka swego miejsca na tej scenie, tej Unii Pracy się załapał, takiej bardziej lewicującej, tylko że co z tego, co daje lewica jak on sam jest na prawo ale poglądy ma na lewo, i nic nie załatwia. Jest kupa takich ludzi i dlatego związek tyle stracił, co stracił na prestiżu, dlatego. Ale tam gdzie dbają drudzy ... i niestety trzeba ponieść konsekwencje, bo nikt nie wiedział w jakim kierunku, tak rozmawiałem na dole, jakie masz gwarancje że, tej ordynacji wyborczej, jaka w tej chwili istnieje, to się musi. Co się dzieje na przykład w AWS, jest kilku z tych ZchNów, KPNów, oni głosują dokładnie jak komuniści właściwie, i teraz co? Wyrzucić ich z klubu parlamentarnego, to się traci dwa miejsca, i tak mandatów nie dadzą, bo wtedy byłaby skuteczność. Mandat jest przepisany jemu, jeżeli byłoby przepisany dla partii, to wtedy można było na jego miejsce wprowadzić kogoś innego i oni byliby wtedy bardziej zdyscyplinowani. Ale tak jemu nic nie grozi.

Czy tak jak w Parlamencie w związku wzrasta niezadowolenie?

Skrzydła radykalne na pewno są, ale tutaj tego nie odczuwa się. On jest radykał ale gdzieś on na dole krzyczy i kończy, a nie potrafi z tym wystąpić. Obserwując ten WZD, mieliśmy walne zebranie delegatów, były sprawozdania komisji zakładowych, to za mało dla mnie było dyskusji, bo dyskusja gdzieś tam na dole się odbywa i u nas, ja wiem, może jest to przytłumienie tych ludzi poprzez ten stary system. On się nie umie wypowiedzieć przy jakimś większym gronie ludzi, bo ja nie wierzę to, że dla wszystkich wszystko dla wszystkich tych sprawozdań było jasne, że na przykład się zgadzał z niektórymi rzeczami, nie wierzę. Z racji tych przekorów przecież, i trzeba tych ludzi wciągać w dyskusję bo albo idą na papierosa i wtedy dyskusja się zaczyna.

Ta grupa Seweryna Jaworskiego już nie istnieje?

Nie, u nas nie ma takiego problemu akurat. Była przez jakiś czas Solidarność '80, ale samorozwiązanie nastąpiło, nie wiem nawet jak się stało ale przestali w pewnym momencie być. Kilku ludzi z Solidarności 80 u nas jeszcze pracuje, część do nas, część po prostu z boku stoi. Oni są, pracują, pewni nie należą nigdzie, niektórzy są zrównoważonymi ludźmi, a niektórzy krzykacze, tak jak zresztą w każdym społeczeństwie.

Tak, zawsze są. Jeszcze są inne sprawy, które mnie interesują: bezpieczeństwo i ochrona środowiska. Czy są one teraz aktualne, czy są one kwestiami spornymi...

Zdecydowanie. Z ochroną środowiska, to od kilku lat się zaczęło, było zderzenie potężne w pewnym momencie, jak Marteny chodziły, a tutaj ta gmina zaczęła, wyciągała, a w tym momencie jak chcieli trochę, była presja, żeby tę hutę w ogóle zamknąć, że tu piece martenowskie są, że tu, że tam... Tych pieców już dawno nie było a jeszcze nam truli o tych piecach, że my trujemy tymi piecami

ID: work

Environment

Martenowskimi, a ich w ogóle nie było. Zmieniło się pod względem też gazu, bo nawet dawno nie produkuje się gazu czernicowego, tak że... Tak oglądając ten piec, ten nowy, on rzeczywiście nie jest jeszcze tak jak powinno być, ale nieporównywalny jest z tymi starymi piecami, jest nieporównywalna sprawa.

Pamiętam, jak jeszcze pracowało się systemem czterobrygadowym, jak zatrzymali służnicę między dwoma elektrykami, jak ich załączyli, dostawało się ponad 120 decybeli, tam wychodziło się normalnie że wariactwo można było dostać bo głowę rozrywało. Później się zaczęło tamten drugi stopień odpalania, tylko że z kolej znowu był problem, bo ten drugi stopień odpalania zabiera za dużo energii, i nawet ludzie sami na drugiej zmianie, na trzeciej zmianie, żeby wyciągnąć szybciej, to wyłączali to urządzenie, tak że jest też problem, z tego co ja wiem mają różne kontakty.

Nie ma teraz takich przekroczeń jakie kiedyś były założmy, mówią że huta kopci, ale trzeba popatrzeć jak kopci Żerań, jak kopci cementownia, tutaj się nie mówi o tym bo akurat huta wszystkich przeszkadzała, bo na Bielanach była. Teraz u nas jednak się zmieniło podejście tych radnych z władz bielańskich, z tego względu pewnie, że podatki wpływają, ale tu generalnie się zmieniło, bo nawet znając niezależnych tych ludzi, którzy koło badają środowisko, jest zmiana. Z tym środowiskiem jest różnie, idąc na remont rano na walcownię między walcowniami widziałem jak sobie zajączki kica, bażanty chodzą, chyba nie jest tak bardzo zniszczone wszystko. To rzeczywiście osobiście widziałem rano o wpół do siódmej, sześć bażantów i zając kicał. Więc jeszcze podkreślam, ci chodzą w sumie. Tylko nie tu ze strony Kasprowicza, tylko tam gdzie metal, złom jest, tam z tyłu nawet sarnkę można spotkać, autentycznie, w czasie strajku ja sam widziałem jak chodziłem sobie po hucie.

I koksownii tutaj nie ma...

Nie ma. Koksownie mają tam na Śląsku, po co węgiel tu włożyć, żeby... Tu są elektryczne piece, wielkiego pieca tu nie było nigdy.

A z bezpieczeństwem, w remontownii to jest ważne...

Bezpieczeństwo dla mnie jest ważne. Z tym bezpieczeństwem też jest różnie... Safety
Akurat tu, odpukać, tych wypadków jest mało. Kolega akurat jest na zwolnieniu, to głupi wypadek ale zwróciłem się do PIP, jednak zabezpieczenia. Spadł mu roztopiony metal do buta, z palnika. On jest spawaczem na stacjonarym stanowisku, tam gdzie się robi na jednym miejscu a nie tam, gdzie się chodzi po dziurach. Teraz mają wprowadzić buty zabezpieczające, żeby był opiekacz w spodniach... Sprawy bhp na pewno są najważniejsze w sumie, pamiętam huta się nazywała, że jest producent inwalidów. Pamiętam takie czasy, że śmiertelnych wypadków było po 10. Była inna produkcja, na trzy zmiany... W latach 70., koniec 70., początek 80., było tego kupa, teraz jest mniej, śmiertelnego wypadku to nie pamiętam kiedy był, mniejszych wypadków też jest zdecydowanie mniej. Małych kontuzji jeszcze jest, bo tego się nie uniknie. Ryzyko zawodowe istnieje w każdym zawodzie. Transport jest bardzo niebezpieczny, szczególnie dla młodych, i tu jest pole do popisu m.in. dla działaczy związkowych, żeby ci ludzie uczuli, żeby nic się nie stało, on nie ma po prostu tego nawyku, idzie i nie patrzy czy coś wisi nad głową czy coś takiego, z resztą problem jest od kupy czasu. My jak remontujemy wiadomo, że trzeba teren na dole zagrodzić płotem, na stałe, taśmami, żeby było widoczne. A co z tego, taśmami się podnosi i chodzi się, najwyżej potem ktoś robi... Różne sytuacje się zdarzają. Tu nie jest jak u marynarzy, że wpadniesz do wody, a tu też jest praca wysoko przecież.

Kończąc rozmowę, jak w sumie wygląda praca związkowca, czy jest ona zadowolająca?

Trudno byłoby, jak nie było tego, że ktoś nas naciska, że jest źle zrobione, byłoby źle, człowiek zaraz wpadłby w jakiś samozachwyt, samospokojenie, byłoby to nie dobre, czasami należałoby, żeby ktoś przywołał do porządku, żeby być jak najlepsi.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| Abbreviation | Meaning | Translation and notes |
|--------------|--|--|
| AWS | Akcja Wyborcza Solidarności | Solidarity Electoral Action |
| Cfdt | Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail | French Democratic Labour Confederation |
| Cgil | Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro | General Italian Confederation of Labour |
| Cgt | Confédération Générale du Travail | General Labour Confederation |
| Cisl | Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Lavoratori | Italian Confederation of Worker Unions |
| Cisnal | Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Nazionali del Lavoro | Italian Confederation of National Labour Union (linked to the MSI) |
| Cobas | Comitati di Base | Basis Committees |
| CRZZ | Centralna Rada Związków Zawodowych | Central Trade Union Council (official unions until 1981) |
| DS | Democratici di Sinistra | Left Democrats (mutation of the PDS in 1998) |
| EMF | European Metalworkers' Federation | |
| ETUC | European Trade Union Confederation | |
| EWC | European Work Council | |
| Fat | Federazione Alimentazione e Tabacco | Food and Tobacco Federation (associated to the Cisl) |
| Fim | Federazione Italiana Metalmeccanici | Italian Federation of Metalworkers (associated to the Cisl) |
| Fiom | Federazione Impiegati e Operai Metalmeccanici | Federation of Manual and Clerical Metalworkers (associated to the Cgil) |
| Flai | Federazione dell'Agroindustria | Agroindustry Federation (associated to the Cgil) |
| FLM | Federazione Lavoratori Metalmeccanici | Metalworkers' Federation (unitary federation of Fiom, Fim, Uilm from '72 to '84) |
| KPN | Konfederacja Polski Niepodległej | Confederation of Independent Poland (nationalist party) |
| KPP | Konfederacja Polskich Pracodawców | Confederation of the Polish Employers |
| MSI | Movimento Sociale Italiano | Italian Social Movement (fascistizing party) |
| NSZZ | Niezależny Samorządny Związek Zawodowy | Independent Autonomous Trade Union |
| OPZZ | Ogólnopolskie Porozumienie Związków Zawodowych | All-Polish Coalition of Trade Unions (official unions since 1982) |
| PCI | Partito Comunista Italiano | Italian Communist Party |
| PDS | Partito Democratico della Sinistra | Democratic Party of the Left (heir of the PCI) |
| PZPR | Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza | Polish United Worker Party (Communist) |
| RLS | Rappresentanze dei Lavoratori alla Sicurezza | Workers' Representatives for Security |
| ROP | Ruch Odbudowy Polski | Movement for the Reconstruction of Poland |
| RSU | Rappresentanze Sindacali Unitarie | United Trade Union Representatives |
| Sida | Sindacato Dell'Automobile | Automotive Union (company-based union of Fiat workers) |
| Sin-Cobas | Sindacato Intercategoriale dei Comitati di Base | Inter-Industry Trade Union of the Rank and File Committees |
| Slai | Sindacato dei Lavoratori Autorganizzati | Inter-Industry Trade Union of Self- |

| | | |
|------|--|--|
| SLD | Intercategoriale Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej | organised Workers Alliance of the Democratic Left (mutation of the PZPR) |
| UGL | Unione Generale del Lavoro | General Labour Union (mutation of the Cislal) |
| Uil | Unione Italiana del Lavoro | Italian Labour Union |
| Uilm | Unione Italiana Lavoratori Metalmeccanici | Italian Union of Metalworkers (associated to the Uil) |
| UP | Unia Pracy | Labour Union |
| UW | Unia Wolności | Freedom Union |

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